UNESCO the Courier

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November 1998

Immigrants on the borderline

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Small arms, many hands

Crossed wires in global telecoms

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From Russia's **coal** country

Photos by Steve Connors

© Steve Connors/Sipa Press, Paris

▲ The wooden shacks in this mining village are without proper sanitation facilities or running water. The elderly, whose meagre pensions arrive more or less regularly, fetch water from the well, unless it has frozen too hard. Temperatures as low as minus 68°C have been recorded in the region.

◄ Lubov Konev, a miner's wife, and her two sons, Vove (16) and Vita (5).The whole family lives in one room in a Stalin-era barrack block.

In a Siberian mining town where alcoholism is rife, a drunken miner collapses in the snow. ►

Photos: © Steve Connors/Sipa Press, Paris

Russia's **angry** miners

Half of Russia's 900,000 miners have been sacked over the past seven years and the other half are struggling to make ends meet because they are being paid months, even years late. Their anger exploded last January

The legendary patience of Russia's miners came to an end last January when they suddenly revolted at Kuznetskaya and nearby places in the pine-forests of the Siberian taiga. For five days, in the half-light of the winter, the manager of the local coal mine was held hostage by a group of miners driven to desperation. Helped by their wives and children, they kept him prisoner in his office by barricading the door with tables and chairs. They had not been paid for three years, they said. They had no running water, no telephones. Their children could no longer go to school, which was fifteen kilometres away.

Their remote village, located in the Kuzbass region, the heart of Russia's coal industry, is a Soviet-style mining settlement like many others in the country's coalfields. The privileged status that all manual workers, especially miners, enjoyed in the Soviet Union was in fact only relative and partial. They may have been paid twice as much as teachers or doctors but they were often housed in insanitary wooden shacks, usually consisting of a single room and a tiny kitchen.

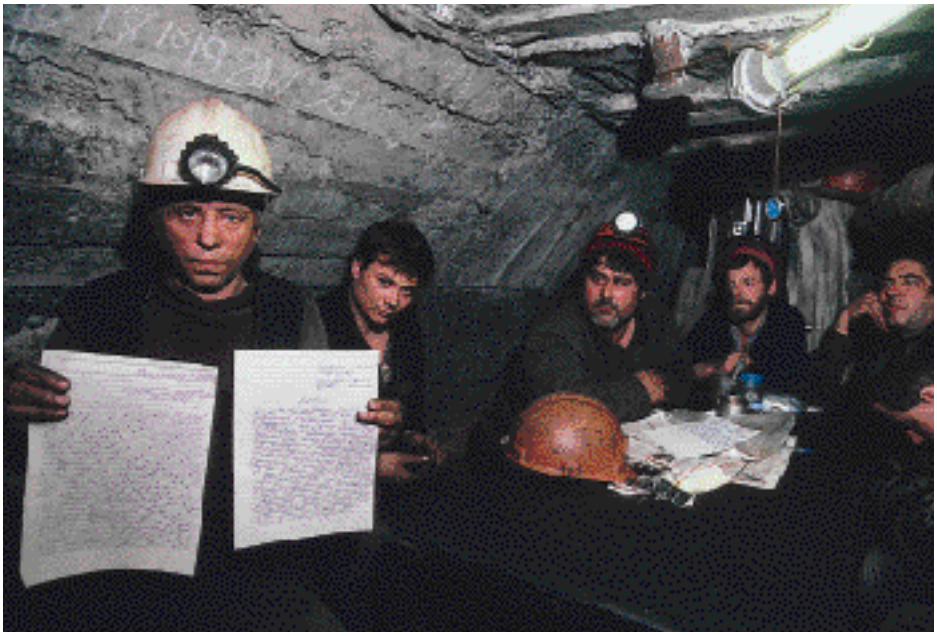
These hovels are still there, rows of them along muddy tracks which are either frozen or dusty according to the season.

'Kidnapping the mine manager in January got us nowhere. We're the real hostages here, the miners and their families'

They date back to the time of the gulags, when mines were dug by prisoners in remote Arctic regions without any regard for profitability. When the market economy arrived, keeping them going became a tricky afair.

Many miners still live in such barrack blocks because almost no new low-cost housing has been built since the collapse of the Soviet Union. But the end of the old Soviet empire has had plenty of other consequences. In Siberia, safety conditions in the mines quickly deteriorated as equipment wore out. The huge expanses of cheap housing which began to replace the old mining villages in the 1950s are no longer maintained.

In Kuznetskaya, thirty-two-year-old Maria Petrovna lives in one room with her husband and their two children, aged six and eleven. An ancient coal stove, a child's



Photos: © Steve Connors/Sipa Press, Paris

▲ **In the Kuzbass, a desolate and icy region of western Siberia more than 3,000 km east of Moscow, coal miners have been on strike since last January demanding their unpaid wages. Workers at the Krasny mine, near Kiselevsk (above), say they have not been paid for a year. Top, they argue their case with the mine manager, Alexander Khamliuk.**

▲ **To heat their homes, retired miners go with buckets to pick coal from the pithead.**

Funeral for a miner who died of a heart attack at the age of 31.In 1997,283 coal miners died in workplace accidents, compared with 172 the year before. ►

bathtub, a wardrobe, a shaky table and washing hung up to dry over the beds clutter up the space.

How has this family survived without any pay for three years? Partly thanks to the private vegetable plot behind each shack. To prepare for the long winter, potatoes have been stored in the cellar and as many things as possible have been pickled.

But in Siberia, kitchen gardens cannot produce enough nor for very long. So grandparents help out, chipping in with the pittance of a pension they still receive on a more regular basis. But this is not enough, and so families go into debt. This situation is widespread in Russia. It affects not only individuals, but firms (including the mines), those who provide services to them, their customers, the banks, the government—everyone is a borrower. The external

debts of Russia's banks neared $200 billion by the time they almost collapsed this summer.

The miners also survive by stealing, by dismantling abandoned factories and other facilities bit by bit. Barter is becoming routine. The lone shop in Kuznetskaya no longer has any cash. At the beginning of the year, the manager "sold" basic food items to the miners, hoping to be paid when they received their wages.

He also distributed goods which he got through complicated barter negotiations involving coal from the mine. Sometimes the families have to try to sell by themselves tyres or nails obtained this way. Many miners have sunk into alcoholism, whose ravages are still on the increase in Russia, sending many to a premature death or disability.

Maria Petrovna and her relatives could ►

© Steve Connors/Sipa Press, Paris

take no more of this. They were tired of living off their wits, while the mine manager was living high off the hog. He had moved to a new area outside the village, where mansions have been built behind high walls.

In the West, mine closures in the past few decades have been isolated dramas, resisted by groups of workers. In Russia, such closures are happening at a time when the country itself is breaking up and plunging into a crisis whose outcome is uncertain. The first seven years of transition from communism to capitalism have ended in failure. The fate of the miners is no longer a major factor in the tragedy being experienced by the vast majority of people, including the middle class which was just starting to emerge, and the intellectuals, who are having a hard time playing their role as observers and chroniclers of this tormented society.

Half of Russia's 900,000 miners have been sacked since 1991. Only very few of them have managed to find other work. More dismissals are expected during the next few months,along with the sacking of other workers traditionally less well-organized,in Russia as elsewhere,than the miners. But most Russian trade unions have been discredited by their past collaboration either with the communist authorities,or with the present regime.So they cannot mobilize large numbers of people to support the miners, workers and others who continue to toil without pay for months or even years.

In Kuznetskaya, Maria Petrovna is bitter. "Kidnapping the mine manager in January got us nowhere. We're the real hostages here, the miners and their families. We've got too many thieves and scoundrels."

All the miners in Russia have come to the same conclusion, whether they live in the Kuzbass region, in the Far East, in Rostov-on-Don or in Vorkuta, above the Arctic Circle. Everywhere, each day is pretty much like living in hell. ■

Sophie Shihab in Moscow

Unpalatable options

In 1996, the World Bank made an initial loan of $500 million for the reconversion of Russia's coal mines, which were considered uneconomic. Some of this money was hijacked by real or bogus middlemen. Before making a second loan of $800 million, the bank is demanding that half the 200 mines still operating be shut down and that all state subsidies be abolished by the year 2000. The subsidies are used to pay around 17% of the miners' wages, the rest coming from the mining companies, which have been partly privatized since last year.

Retraining the dismissed miners is very difficult. In the Tula Basin, for example, only 1,700 of the 20,000 miners dismissed there a few years ago have found new jobs. Russian coal production has slumped, from 400 million tonnes in 1980 to 240 million tonnes in 1997. ■

Imagining and building the **21st century**

Unesco/Jines Forbes

Federico Mayor

UNESCO's activities are based on the conviction that it is possible to influence the course of world events and that tomorrow's world is being constructed today. And the structure will be all the more solid if it rests on clear ethical principles and a sharp awareness of the gap between what exists and what should exist.

The future of humankind is threatened by real dangers. In too many parts of the world, human dignity is still being abused by war and by exclusion of the most vulnerable and needy. Inequality and poverty are growing. The walls of urban segregation are rising. The education of women is being forgotten. And people's violence towards each other is matched by the violence they inflict on nature, thereby jeopardizing their own future.

Lack of foresight and the race for quick profit have led to intensive exploitation of natural resources, ecological disasters, ever more serious problems of water supply and desertification as well as pollution of every kind. Who can say for sure if scientific and technological progress will bring more solutions than new perils?

The rapid growth of biotechnology and the possibilities of human genetic engineering are even leading people to reconsider the very definition of what constitutes a human being. We risk being enslaved by our own inventions and becoming prisoners in a maze of our own creation unless we are very vigilant and take a clear ethical stand.

We should all be concerned about what lies ahead. The future must not be left to the ravages of blind and cynical forces. Ethical deficits seem to me to be more serious in the long term than budget deficits. The ethics of the future is sustained by the belief that there is no contradiction between solidarity with the present generation and solidarity with future generations. Both embody the same rejection of exclusion and injustice, the same reminder of the bond that unites all people on earth. This ethics does not make vain prescriptions for a future which never arrives. It starts here and now, with care for others and the determination to pass on to future generations a heritage which is not irretrievably damaged.

One sometimes hears it said that "the future is too complicated and too uncertain, so let's make the best of the present". My answer is that it is too easy to wait for problems to arise before tackling them and to take action only in emergencies. Such short-sighted reasoning leaves only the choice of yielding or adapting to events. If we are not to be at their mercy, if we are to regain control of our own future, if we are to escape routine and obsolescence, we must start thinking again in the long term by looking as far ahead as possible and anticipating developments.

Only by adopting this kind of perspective can we counter uncertainty about the future and create room for action now. And it is action we need. Anticipating means fighting apathy and indifference, awakening people's consciences, opening their eyes to tomorrow's dangers and readjusting, if need be, today's decisions. Foresight is the basis of effective action.

Foresight calls for two qualities: comprehension and imagination. Comprehension because the future does not come out of the blue. It leads back to earlier states of awareness, to rules or an absence of rules whose reasons must be understood. The effort of linking the present and the future in this way will unite the world and turn it into a whole, producing the overall grasp which is precisely the meaning of the verb "to comprehend." This effort would remain an abstract one if it was not enriched and illuminated by imagination. Thinking about the twenty-first century means dreaming, conjuring up models which are perhaps contradictory, imagining new worlds and utopias. Allowing ourselves to understand reality and to imagine the possible, to achieve the possible and to attempt the impossible. ■

Will there be a **21st century**?

Some 60 leading figures from 40 countries—scientists, economists, inventors, demographers, sociologists, historians, NGO officials and political leaders—met to discuss this question at UNESCO's Paris Headquarters from 16 to 19 September.

They were neither fatalistic nor blindly optimistic. The inter-disciplinary dialogues about the future in which they took part highlighted many uncertainties and one major certainty, namely that our preparations for the 21st century must take account of instability and complexity and be guided by the principles of justice and sharing.

The papers given at this gathering can be found at the website www.unesco.org/aforum and will also be published in book form next year.

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Nuclear watch in

The fate of the unparalleled concentration of nuclear material on Russia's Kola peninsula is alarming neighbouring Scandinavian countries

The strike only lasted an hour, but it was enough to set alarm bells ringing in Moscow. Organized by Russia's nuclear defence workers in September this year, it caused such concern in Moscow that despite the severe financial crisis the government allotted about $16 million for the defence employees who had not been paid for months. Even the latest deal gave the workers only half of the wages owed to them by the government. "People are really hungry. How can you ask them to look after our security?" said Yury Bersenyev, a scientist from the closed nuclear city Snezhinsk, in an interview to a local daily.

Corroding equipment and dissatisfied servicemen

The Russian Union of Nuclear Industry Workers says that hungry nuclear workers and lack of funding could lead to serious trouble in the Russian nuclear sector, including defence establishments. In addition to corroding submarines, dissatisfied military personnel now add more complications for the Russian authorities. In September this year a disgruntled armed conscript killed eight of his fellow servicemen and threatened to blow up the Akula-class submarine at the Skalisty naval base in the Kola peninsula. Finally he killed himself in the torpedo compartment. Though Russian officials assured that the sailor could not have damaged the torpedoes, any explosion in the compartment was strong enough to damage the submarine's single nuclear reactor. This incident alarmed Norwegian officials, as it happened just 120 km from the border in the country's north. The unstable situation in the Russian nuclear sector has aggravated the worries of the neighbouring Scandinavian nations who will be the first to be affected in case of a nuclear disaster in Russia's north-west.

The gravest environmental hazard in the Arctic Circle stems from nuclear activity on the Russian side, especially in and around the northern Kola peninsula. Nowhere else on earth is there such a concentration of civilian and naval nuclear reactors. According to the Yablokov report[1], an official Russian document, there were a total of 270 nuclear reactors in Murmansk and Arkhangelsk counties in 1990. Nuclear activity in and around the Kola peninsula includes power plants, nuclear submarines, huge piles of nuclear waste and the effects of nuclear tests conducted by the former Soviet Union.

Russia's immediate neighbour Finland is the only European Union country to share a 1,200-kilometre border with Russia and faces constant environmental threats from the former superpower. Finland's Arctic Circle would be the first and worst hit region in the event of a Russian environmental disaster. With memories of Chernobyl still haunting them, the Finns are constantly monitoring air, water, soil, plants and meat to make sure nothing is amiss on the Russian side.

Despite the presence of so many old-fashioned nuclear reactors and unprotected piles of nuclear waste so close to the border, Kristina Rissanen, head of the Regional Laboratory of the Finnish Centre for Radiation and Nuclear Safety (CRNS), in Rovaniemi, tries to keep a sense of perspective. "The radiation levels across the border at present are not alarming. Moreover the Russians in recent years have started showing a more open approach, and that itself is a positive factor."

Rissanen's laboratory, eighteen metres underground, is designed to withstand a nuclear holocaust. The enthusiastic team of chemists in CRNS analyse hundreds of samples every day, from reindeer meat to industrial products. Kristina makes frequent trips to northwestern Russia on joint expeditions to find out the fate of submerged nuclear reactors and the operational reactors.

The Yablokov report noted that only 15 per cent of the dry-docked submarines had been properly decommissioned by the removal of reactor fuels and the reactor section. *A state of the Arctic Environment Report*[2] says that along with nuclear waste, the Soviet Union dumped six nuclear submarine reactors and a shielding assembly from an icebreaker reactor, containing spent fuel, between the years 1959 and 1991.

Expeditions in the Barents Sea

Rissanen, whose team often searches the Barents Sea for the nuclear reactors from sunken Russian nuclear submarines, takes a different view. "There is no doubt many of the submerged reactors could pose a serious threat to the environment of the Arctic region in the future. I am more worried about the Kola nuclear power plant than those reactors lying under the sea. The nuclear reactors in Kola are very old and similar to Chernobyl-type reactors."

A Russian nuclear-powered submarine moored at Severomorsk.

© Photo AFP/ITAR-TASS/FILES, Paris

the Far North

The Northern Fleet and naval shipyards include nuclear-powered submarines and battle cruisers based at nine ports along the northern coast of the Kola peninsula and at two bases on the Archangelsk region's coast. There are about ninety vessels in operation and more than seventy out of operation and laid up, containing about 170 reactors in operation and 130 out of operation. About 5,000 tons of solid waste are generated annually at the Northern Fleet's nuclear vessels and at shipyards in the two regions.

Rissanen cautions that new storage facilities have to be built in the Russian Federation to ensure the safety of the nuclear waste. "During one of the expeditions we found excessive radioactive caesium in the sediments of Dvina River estuary, which is most probably transported from the large catchment area of the river. Radioactive materials were also found near Atomflot in Murmansk. However, these are not above the normal levels. It may be originating from nuclear storage sites other than those known. In certain areas in the Barents Sea, where old reactors have been dropped, the radiation level is higher. But Russian officials do not allow us to go near the precise spot. As long as these are not at threatening levels it can be managed."

Western nuclear experts who have visited Russia say that the formal requirements, regulations and control in the Russian Federation today still do not meet modern standards. To complicate matters, the enterprises are subordinate to many different authorities, federal and local, which make the regulatory system complex. The amount of waste and spent fuel greatly exceeds the capacity of storage and reprocessing. Most importantly, there is no money to fully maintain, restore or replace equipment and facilities for radioactive waste and spent fuel conditioning, handling, transport and storage. According to former Russian Deputy Atomic Energy Minister Nikolay Yegorov the cleanup projects in the Northern Fleet would require some $1.5 billion. "Matters worsen every year. . . . and could turn into a catastrophe," RIA Novosty news agency quoted Yegorov as saying in July this year.

Shannon Kile, a research assistant at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) voices concern over the fate of the nuclear missiles and fuel in the decommissioned submarines and dismantled missiles. He says "as per the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START-I) the Russian Federation dismantled hundreds of nuclear delivery vehicles. Both in START-I and the ongoing START-II (to be ratified by Russian parliament) the status of the nuclear warheads fixed in those missiles is unspecified and future arms reduction agreements should take care of the warheads also."

About 5,000 tons of solid nuclear waste are generated annually by the Northern Fleet's nuclear vessels and at shipyards in the region

Novaya Zemlya (New Earth) was the main Soviet nuclear test site between 1955 and 1990. In total, 132 nuclear explosions were conducted, 87 of which were atmospheric (above ground), three were underwater and 42 underground. More than 90 per cent of the total power of all the nuclear weapons tests performed by the former Soviet Union were made in Novaya Zemlya.[3] According to scientists at the Institute of Radiation Hygiene, St. Petersburg[4], the highest levels of radioactive fallout in the entire Russian arctic and subarctic area were found in the Kola peninsula. They say the sources of contamination were atmospheric nuclear weapons tests up to 1963, when the maximum fallout concentrations of radioactive caesium and strontium were found, and the accident at Chernobyl in 1986.

Despite pressure from Scandinavian and other European countries it is not realistic to expect the Russians to wholly abandon their nuclear energy projects, which are badly required for the power-starved northwest region of the country. Irrespective of advances in other forms of electricity generation, Russia will probably continue to use and develop nuclear technology because of its huge infrastructure and enormous manpower. Russia, in this regard, needs help from Western countries to find a solution to the problem.

Though Norway has taken the lead in co-operating with the Russians in working out solutions, Western experts say the intransigent nature of Russian bureaucracy blocks rapid progress in co-operation. During Norwegian King Harald V's visit to Moscow in May 1998, Russian President Boris Yeltsin said Russia would dismantle all its old nuclear submarines in the Barents Sea region if Norway provided the necessary financial assistance. An agreement signed between the two countries in May 1998 cleared the hurdles that have delayed Norwegian efforts to participate in the cleanup of the Russian Northern Fleet's leaking storage facilities for spent nuclear fuel in Andreeva Bay at the Kola peninsula. Norway has granted $60 million for the first projects and more could be found if the programme is successful.

"Though the Norwegian side is willing to help the Russian side there is no co-operation from Russian authorities. The Ministry of Defence does not want to give any access into their leaking facilities. They say they would give video clips describing the sites. You cannot make plans and give money just by looking at the video clips. We hope the situation improves in the coming months," said Igor Kudrik, a researcher at the Bellona Foundation in Oslo. ■

Ethirajan Anbarasan
in Stockholm and Rovaniemi

1. Alexi V. Yablokov, et al., *Facts and Problems Connected with the Disposal of Radioactive Waste in the Seas Adjacent to the territory of the Russian Federation* (Administration of the President of the Russian Federation, Moscow, February 1993).
2. *A state of the Arctic Environment Report*, Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme, Oslo, 1997.
3. Jan Olof Snihs, *Nuclear activities and international co-operation in the Barents region of the Russian Federation*, Swedish Radiation Protection Institute, Stockholm.
4. Alexi A. Doudarev et al., *The radioecological situation in the reindeer herding of the Kola peninsula, Environmental Radioactivity in the Arctic*, Osteras, Norway, 1995.

The river's

Heavy rainfall led to this year's flooding in China, but years of human error turned it into a national catastrophe

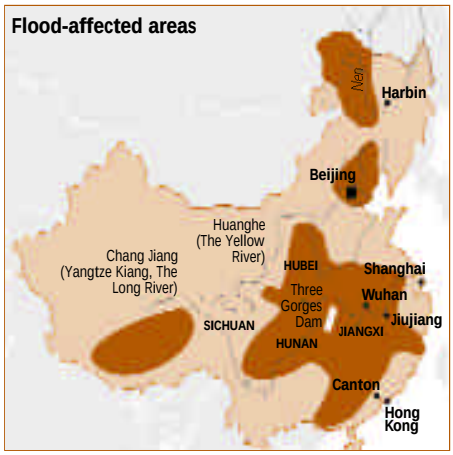
The floods that ravaged the Chang Jiang (Yangtze-Kiang, literally the "Long River") basin this year were the most serious since 1954, and flooding in northeast China was the worst in recorded history.

However, compared to the situation in 1954, the volume of water in this year's Yangtze flooding "was not very great", says Lu Qinkan, a former official in China's Ministry of Water Resources who has been monitoring the river since the 1940s. And yet the damage is more serious. Atmospheric physicist Tao Shiyan, a member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, concludes that unfavourable weather conditions "were not fully responsible" for a disaster which, according to official sources, claimed more than 3,000 lives between June and August this year, affected 223 million persons and almost a quarter of the country's arable land, destroyed nearly five million dwellings, and caused damage costing 166 billion yuan (around $21 billion).

A hefty price tag for neglect

How could such catastrophic flooding have occurred? Lu attributes the problem to the river's inability to release its floodwater efficiently. "The key factor in controlling the Yangtze's floods is overall planning for storage and above all for discharge of floodwaters," he says. "Laid down in the 1950s, it remains a good principle today. Unfortunately the balance has always been skewed in favour of storage behind dams." Now many sections of the dikes and embankments which total 3,570 km in length along the lower and middle reaches of the Yangtze and "are essential to enchance the river's capacity to discharge floodwater" are badly in need of repair. This summer, seepage, cracks, and collapses occurred at thousands of points, showing that the dikes were weak.

Given the length and width of the Yangtze, Lu explains, if the height of the dikes was raised by an average of one metre, an additional 7,500 cubic metres of water could be discharged per second (20 billion cubic metres per month). However, a ten-year plan drawn up in 1980 to heighten and reinforce the Yangtze's dikes has never been fully carried out, Lu adds. If it had, "this year's disaster would have been considerably alleviated."



The water authorities explain that the delay is due to shortage of funds. Whereas 4.8 billion yuan ($1.6 billion at the then rate) were needed to finance 34 projects in 1980, only 399 million yuan had been invested by 1987, and only 12 projects had been launched. One exception is Jiangxi province, the final stage of the river's course before it enters the East China Sea. Authorities there have spent around 7 billion yuan on flood defence work since the early 1990s, about one seventh of it on dikes along the Yangtze.

But the price of neglect elsewhere has been high. Damage caused by Yangtze flooding in 1995, 1996 and this year has cost at least 200 billion yuan ($25 billion). This sum represents nearly 40 times the budget for the 1980 plan and amounts to two-thirds of the total investment needed for the controversial Three Gorges Dam project. Many engineers believe that this dam, when completed, could help tame the Yangtze floods, but others, including Lu, are sceptical. As an adviser to the expert panel on flood control during the feasibility study carried out in the 1980s, he maintains that the dam's flood control capacity "will only be limited".

Located near Yichang, where the Yangtze emerges from narrow gorges before entering its flatter middle reaches, the dam may help to control upstream floods. But this year's deadly floods were

Many sections of dikes and embankments are badly in need of repair

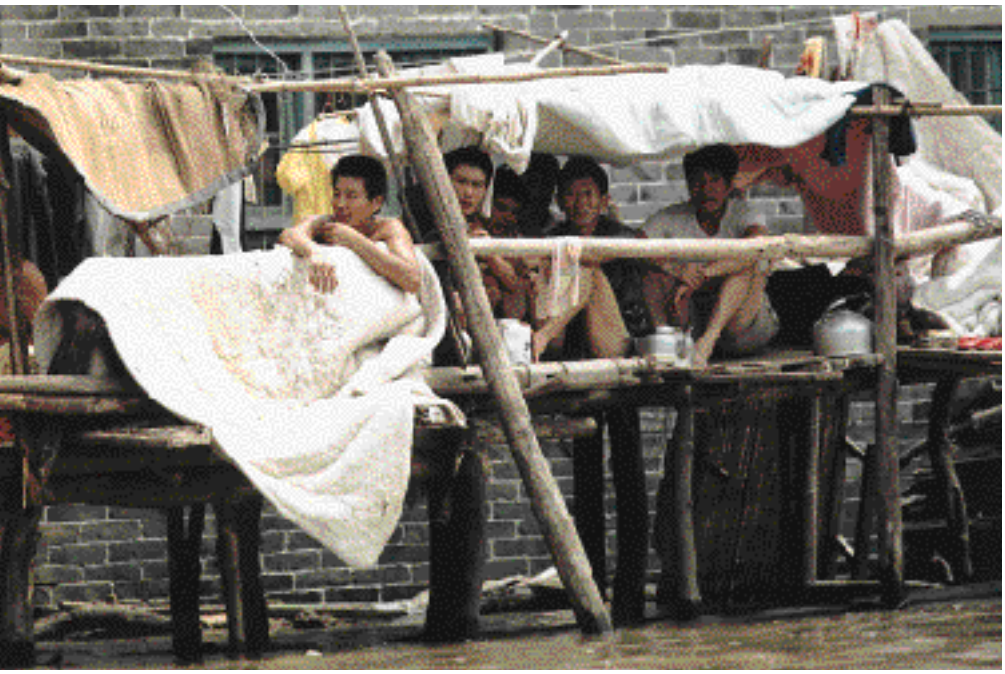
downstream, particularly in Jiangxi, Hunan and Hubei provinces.

With a total storage capacity of 39.3 billion cubic metres, the Three Gorges Reservoir will have a flood control capacity of 22.2 billion cubic metres, Lu says, a figure "that is far exceeded by the river's gross flood volume." He maintains that the Three Gorges Dam attracts massive investment at the expense of basic local flood defence work. Lu Yaoru, a hydrogeologist with the Ministry of Land

Comparison of 1954 and 1998 floods

Station	Maximum discharge (m^3/sec.)		Higher water level (m)		Duration of alarm (no. of days up to 31 August)	
	1954	1998	1954	1998	1954	1998
Yichang	66,800	63,600	55,73	54,50	42	42
Hankou	76,100	71,200	29,73	29,43	68	65
Datong	92,600	82,100	16,64	16,31	76	67

revenge



© Reuters/Max PPP, Paris

More than 200 million Chinese were affected by this year's floods.

and Natural Resources, predicts that the dam will result in more downstream sedimentation, which will affect the river's capacity to discharge floodwater.

Hundreds of lost lakes

In fact, says Yu Xiaogan, a senior geographer with the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the river bed in a number of stretches has already risen by 5 to 14 metres above surrounding field levels as a result of sedimentation. "In those sections the Yangtze has already become a hanging river," he says. "And that is very dangerous."

He believes that misuse of riverside land and adjoining lakes have also aggravated the problem. As a result of population pressure, the surface areas of Dongting and Boyang lakes, two of the major detention basins for Yangtze floods, have shrunk by 46 per cent and 40 per cent respectively in the past forty years. Their storage capacity has decreased from more than 30 billion to around 17 billion cubic metres. Hubei, once known as "the province of a thousand lakes", had 1,066 lakes in the late 1950s. Now there are only 182. Consequently, floodwaters that might have been stored in lakes are now inundating cities,towns and fields that occupy dried out land.Whereas the region had 100,000 inhabitants in 1954, 20,000 of whom had to move out when danger threatened, today there are half a million, 330,000 of whom have to be removed when the waters rise.

Deforestation and land erosion in the upper reaches of the Yangtze have also aggravated the floods. Between 1977 and 1997, according to the National Environmental Protection Agency, 14 million cubic metres of wood were destroyed annually in southwest China. Between 1957 and 1997, the area scarred by soil erosion in the Yangtze basin expanded from 363,800 to 569,700 square kilometres, or from 20.2 per cent to 31.5 per cent of the basin's area. "Falling on thick forest, 50 mm of rainfall won't have any bad effect because all of it is absorbed," says Jin Jianming, an adviser to the National Environmental Protection Agency. "But on exposed ground, just 30 mm of rainfall will run off and cause floods."

"Nature's revenge on China's neglect of ecology over the years", is Yu Xiaogan's verdict on this year's floods. "We used to consider ourselves 'masters of nature'and tried to conquer it," says Liu Shukun, a hydrologist with the Ministry of Water Resources. "Now we must learn to respect nature like a good host." ■

Xiong Lei,Beijing

Two cheers for **industry**

European industry's contribution to climate change by producing acid rain, eating away at the ozone layer and polluting water has decreased since 1995,according to a recent survey carried out by the European Environment Agency (EEA). "In Western Europe, environmental objectives are becoming integrated into industrial decision-making, resulting in falling total industrial emissions to air and water," a report on the survey says.

However, there are two bits of bad news. First, this attitude is as yet "not common in Eastern Europe", and second, small and medium-sized firms are far less green-oriented than bigger ones and are reluctant to take "effective environmental measures".

If industry could do more, the three other "key sectoral driving forces" affecting Europe's environment—transport, energy and agriculture—also still have some way to go. Transport of goods by road has increased by 54 per cent since 1980 and car-borne passenger transport by 46 per cent since 1985. Road congestion and atmospheric and noise pollution are getting worse. And the future looks bleak because of the huge influence of political habit, which encourages the growth of infrastructures and the decline of public in favour of private transport.

In agriculture, the use of non-organic fertilizers and pesticides has levelled off, but water consumption continues to increase while rivers are threatened by excessive plant growth (eutrophication). "Environmental considerations are still only a small part" of the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy, the report says.

Europe also has little to boast about when it comes to energy consumption. This has fallen by 23 per cent in the former communist countries since 1990 because of the economic crisis there. But emission of pollutants is expected to rise quickly when economic recovery takes place. Western Europe is only increasing its energy efficiency by about one per cent a year, while its gross domestic product (GDP) is growing by between 2 and 3 per cent.

It is hard to see how the European Union countries will be able to meet their commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 8 per cent by the year 2010. ■

Under the

Abdelhag Rharade*

Half of Kenya's children drop out of primary school. Efforts to provide them with vocational training, formally or on the job, are yielding modest but promising results

In a poor area of Nairobi, under a blazing sun, fifteen-year-old Reuben is making wooden stools. He and two fellow apprentices have chosen to learn carpentry.

"I really like this way of learning by working," he says,"but I'd also like to get some training at a school so I can get a diploma."

When he ended his formal education by dropping out of primary school,he had obtained no certificate or technical qualifications—a common situation in a country where most young people leave school at primary level without being able to get a job afterwards.

Nearby, amid the din of hammers, young metalworkers are busy recycling cans,sheets of metal and containers. They are making spoons, handles for windows and braziers for cooking. Because they work outdoors,they are known as *jua kali*, which means "under the scorching sun"in Swahili. So are the girls who are mainly apprenticed into two trades, hairdressing and dressmaking.

Despite satisfactory results, Millicent had to break off her education during secondary school when her parents, who had little money, decided that her brother should be the one to be educated. But they offered to send her to a Catholic missionary school which taught girls dressmaking. She did not complete the course there either, once again for lack of money. "However I did learn how to make simple clothes for women and children," she said, "but I really wanted to complete the training so I could be fully qualified."

So she went off to Nairobi and with help from her uncle found an apprenticeship in a dressmaking shop. There, she worked alongside other girls, some of whom had not been able to finish their schooling because of unwanted pregnancies. This problem affects nearly 10,000 Kenyan girls every year, reducing their chances of getting an education and adding to the list of disadvantages—regional, economic and social—that they have to cope with.

Apprenticeships for street children

John was born in Mathare,a poor part of Nairobi. He was brought up by a mother who was unable to provide for the family. When he was eight years old,he became a "parking boy", or street child. After spending three years at a community centre which cares for such children,he returned to wandering the streets of the capital and was eventually arrested by the police, who threw him in jail for a few weeks. "They told me and my friends that St Teresa's Church would help us," he said. "Later, we were taken in by the Undugu Society," a Catholic organization which looks after children, provides them with a basic education and finds them jobs with craftsmen who give them a technical training paid for by the Society. "I saw kids learn to be carpenters that way, so I decided to do that too," said John, who was then apprenticed to a woodworker.

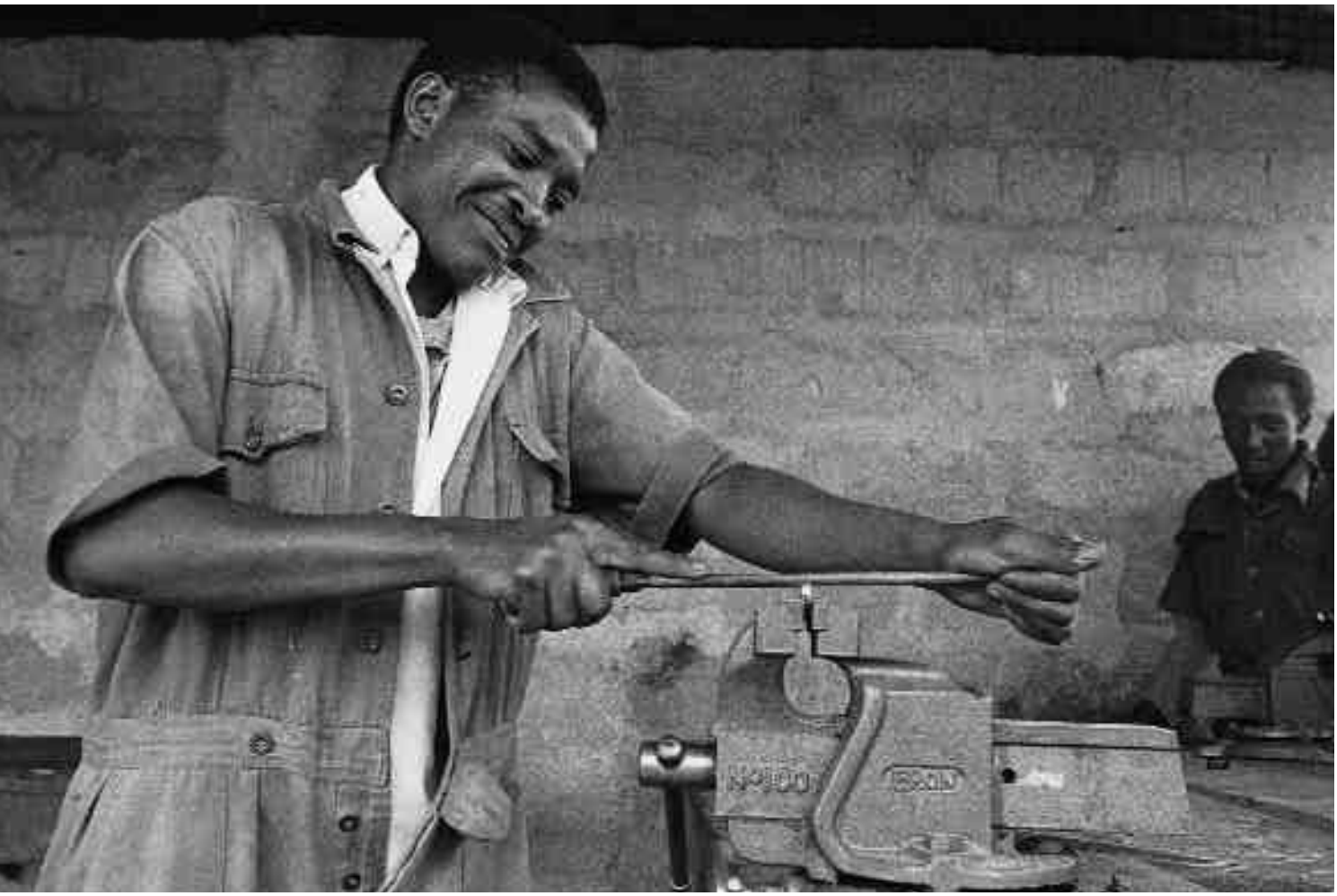
"This kind of rehabilitation aims to help young people do productive work by placing them in a workshop run by a craftsman respected for his ability to train people," said a teacher at the Undugu Society. Social workers advise the children on the choice of a trade and visit them each week in their workshops to see how they are getting on and to organize on a step-by-step basis their preparation for working life.As well as street children,the Undugu

'I really like this way of learning by working, but I'd also like to get some training at a school so I can get a diploma'

Young unemployed men kill time in Nairobi.

© Betty Press/Panos Pictures, Londres

scorching sun



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A student learns metalworking at a village polytechnic.

Society is also helping more and more school-leavers who are looking for some kind of training.

Qualified but jobless

Despite the government's efforts to encourage technical education, the network of some 2,000 public and private vocational training centres absorbs little more than one per cent of the school-age population. These institutions attract young people with a good school record whose poorly-educated parents have the means to pay the fees. But the centres have serious financial problems, despite the support of development aid organizations.

Some centres, like the "youth polytechnics", do not always have enough funds to equip their workshops and raise cash from the local community and from selling items made by the young apprentices. All the same, the apprentices manage to acquire some qualifications, but many surveys show that in spite of their technical education only a few of them find a job when they leave. Good qualifications seem to be less important than knowing the right person when looking for a job commensurate with the training they have received.

In recent years, vocational training centres have been criticized because of their high running costs, the relatively few places available in them and the lack of results as regards placing apprentices in jobs.

In view of this problem and a situation in which more than half the country's children drop out of school every year after primary education, the Kenyan authorities have begun to reform the educational system (see box). The length of primary schooling has been extended from seven years to eight and now includes some technical education. The goal is to give the children some practical skills so they can move on to some kind of training or professional activity in the *jua kali* sector.

At the same time, the government has launched a major initiative to support and boost the prestige of these kinds of jobs. It ▶

'After my apprenticeship, I want to take courses at a technical school and then set up as a carpenter'

* Author of "Les itinéraires des apprentis à Nairobi", IFRA, Nairobi, 1995.

is estimated that the sector can provide about 90,000 professional jobs for young people each year. After receiving technical training, youths in Nairobi no longer systematically look for white-collar jobs when they leave school.

Abdi is an apprentice in a garage, learning about electricity and mechanics. "My parents are farmers in Eldoret and they couldn't afford to pay for me to go to school," he says. "So I came to Nairobi to live with my uncle who introduced me to the owner of this garage." Abdi intends to get solid qualifications so he can go on to a polytechnic and get a diploma and then a job "in a big garage."

Reuben too hopes he won't always be a *jua kali*, making stools: "I'm too young to work," he says. "After my apprenticeship, I want to take courses at a technical school so I can eventually set up my own carpentry business." He would then,in turn,take on his own apprentices, children forced, like him,to drop out of school. ■

© Neil Cooper/Panos Pictures, Londres

Only 90 Kenyan girls out of 100,000 go on to higher education.

- **Population of Kenya:27.1 millions (1995), including 48% under 15**
- **Annual population growth rate: 3,5% (one of the world's highest)**
- **Unemployment rate:unknown**
- **Illiteracy rate: 22%**
- **GNP/per capita/year: $280**

Source: Human Development Report 1998, UNDP

A **two-speed** reform

The Kenyan government began an educational reform programme in 1985 which substantially altered syllabus content and educational structures, putting more emphasis on pre-vocational training that would be useful to pupils as soon as they finished their schooling. The programme aims to adapt the educational system to the country's needs, reduce inequalities by building new schools in poorer regions and, especially, to solve the problem of those who find themselves looking for a job without any vocational training.

Such schooling must instil techniques and knowledge which will be useful for the country's development and prepare young people to hone their skills in vocational training institutes or set themselves up as craftspeople.

Technical, farming and artistic subjects have been added to the primary school curriculum, which was previously limited to subjects like English, mathematics and history. An arts and crafts course teaches design, painting, decoration, pottery and working with leather, wood and metal. It enables those who drop out of school early to make use of these practical skills in their communities, producing tables, chairs, baskets and kitchen utensils.

For the past three years,surveys have been measuring the impact of the teaching of these technical subjects. They show that the least-equipped schools offer little choice of courses and that the pupils are divided up according to social origins and gender. The methods of the teachers have also not changed despite the reforms, because of their slender knowledge of the specialist subjects.

The new educational system is presently coming in for a lot of criticism. The complaints include the hastiness of the reforms—less than a third of the schools have workshops—overloaded courses and poor calculation of costs, especially for families which are sometimes forced to sell several head of cattle to pay for a child's schooling.

The schools ask parents to supply their children with all the materials they need to make the craft items. So education is far from being free and equal. State schools, especially secondary schools, sometimes demand registration fees which are double or even treble the amount set by the ministry of education. So good students from poor families sometimes cannot sign on at the best schools, while those from wealthier families but with only average results can.

This double standard is the main criticism of the new educational system.The result is that many pupils and their parents are now waiting for a reform of the reforms. **A. R.** ■

Schools and sponsors for **Cambodia's children**

Ten-year-old Chev lives in Mondulkiri province, in the highlands of southeastern Cambodia, and belongs to the Phnong ethnic minority. He and his family are a long way from the regional capital,Sem Monorum,and for six months of the year he cannot get to school because bad weather makes the roads impassable.

The provincial governor has appealed for help to the Association for Sponsoring Cambodian Children (ASPECA), a French non-governmental organization set up in 1991 which runs sixty centres around the country housing more than 5,000 orphans or street children. The governor's request comes because of the very difficult living conditions in this remote and sparsely-populated region.

ASPECA does two things. It builds schools in the countryside and has put up a reception centre in Sem Monorum for orphans. It also arranges the sponsoring of the very poorest children.

Chev is "looked after" by a woman living in France who has agreed to pay for his food, health care, school fees and clothing for as long as he needs. He writes regular letters to her promising to make good use of his opportunities and to work hard.

Most of the 4,200 sponsors are men and women in Western Europe and Canada.ASPECA has already built a dozen traditional wooden houses with thatched roofs in Sem Monorum to house the children who live furthest away from school.

Last February, UNESCO signed a co-operation agreement with ASPECA. Under it, the children have received basic school materials and schools have been equipped with libraries. The initiative is part of a bigger programme to expand primary and secondary education in a country where nearly half the population is under fifteen and more than 150,000 children are orphans or down on their luck. ■

Immigrants on the borderline

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Mobility is a key feature of today's world . . . mobility of capital, goods, images, sounds . . . and people. International migrations have never taken place to such a massive extent—on a scale that is even higher between countries of the South than between South and North. But while numbers seem to be growing inexorably, more and more obstacles are being put in place to keep them down. And while the motives for migration continue to be poverty, oppression and war, receiving countries are offering a cooler welcome to immigrant workers. Frontiers are closing, police intervention is being stepped up. One often-heard argument for this is that there are fewer and fewer jobs. The fact is, however, that immigration gives rise to many prejudices because of a reflex that is as perverse as it is ancient: fear of change fuels a search for scapegoats, and immigrants, the "foreigners" on the doorstep, are tailor-made for this role because of their "difference" and their vulnerability.

Statistics on immigration quoted in this dossier in some cases vary widely from article to article, reflecting the different sources used by contributors.

Myths and realities

Demetrios G. Papademetriou*

The globalization of international migration makes it more important than ever for receiving countries to grasp its complexities rather than retreat into a siege mentality

The complex effects of international migration today touch the lives of more people and loom politically and economically larger in more countries and more world regions than ever before. The phenomenon's causes, however, have remained largely the same: economic and personal insecurity, intolerance, economic and political exclusion, oppression, various forms of chaos and catastrophe, conflict and war.

Most of these conditions, however, are typically not sufficient to start or suddenly expand a migration flow to a substantial degree. For that to happen, certain preconditions must already be in place. Most notable among them are the pre-existence of a long-term political and economic relationship; the presence of an anchor ethnic community in the country of destination that can advocate the admission of an immigrant group and assist with its transportation and integration; a loosely regulated labour market that values and can absorb newcomers effectively; and an overall philosophical opposition to the circumstances migrants are attempting to leave by key constituencies in the prospective destination country.

Moving towards control and exclusion

These preconditions have become easier to meet over the last two decades, and as a result international migration's reach is now global. Hence, it is more important than ever to take stock of its dimensions and significance, particularly because interest and reliance on it by the South are intensifying while responses to it by the North (increasingly geared toward control and exclusion) are converging more than ever before.

The universalization of international migration and the realization that most forms of it are highly likely to continue and expand require that we understand it better than we do now. This need is also urgent because the North is in the throes of a fundamental intellectual reappraisal of the value of most migration. I propose that we think of international migration as a system, rather than as a series of events. Doing so allows the analysis to encompass migration processes regardless of the causes and characteristics of a specific flow, of whether it is organized or spontaneous, "permanent" or "temporary", legally sanctioned or "irregular." It also allows the analyst to move beyond the dichotomies that classify states as either "sending" or "receiving", reasons for leaving as either to improve one's economic circumstances or to protect oneself from persecution, and people who move as either permanent settlers or temporary residents.

A two-way system of arrivals and departures

Today, most states simultaneously send and receive immigrants. Similarly, most people move for complex combinations of economic, social, cultural and political reasons. The ideal categories on which legal classifications of prospective immigrants are based are increasingly unable to accommodate this complex mix of motives. The resulting confusion makes the fit between theory and reality tenuous and undermines popular support for a country's entire admissions system. Furthermore, "permanent" immigrants often move to yet another destination or return to their homes (as many as half the members of most immigrant groups that came to the United States in the first half of the twentieth century had returned to their homes by the 1950s). Finally, large proportions of "temporary" migrants stay abroad for long periods of time with or without the authorization to do so, or convert to permanent status.

Understanding international migration properly is important for another reason. The quality (and effectiveness) of policies cannot be better than the analysis that helps policy makers understand an

Some 120 million persons may, like this woman, live outside their country of origin.

Today, most states simultaneously send and receive immigrants. Similarly, most people move for complex combinations of economic, social, cultural and political reasons

* International Migration Policy Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, D.C.

issue and supports the response. Hence, it should be no surprise when a poorly-conceived policy fails to "solve" the problem. And when politics enters the mix, the prescription may be even further off the mark.

The following example demonstrates both points vividly. When the United States either misunderstands or disregards the motivations of many irregular Mexican migrants—who may prefer to have a "sojourner"relationship to the US—and ignores the social and economic fundamentals that make such workers attractive to US employers,its policy responses of tighter border controls and the equivocal prohibition of unauthorized employment

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will not address effectively the complex challenge of irregular migration from Mexico. In fact,the most predictable consequences of such policies are as follows: a) that they would turn short-term migrants into long-term immigrants; b) that they would fuel the growth of increasingly fraudulent documents and organized trafficking industries; and c) that they would undermine the quality of working conditions for *all* workers active in the same sectors as irregular workers (whose increasingly tenuous status makes them accept virtually any conditions of work). This is precisely what has happened.

If the scope of the issue is so broad and the politics surrounding it so complex—*and deteriorating*—what about migration's magnitude? Roughly 120 million persons may live outside their countries of origin. Most of them enter other states, especially those in the North, through highly regulated channels. Excluding refugees, who at any point comprise about 20 per cent of that total, family reunification migrants and legal temporary workers are the two largest components of the total number.

It is important to note that total immigration has grown at an evolutionary, rather than revolutionary rate and that the magnitude of some of its components (such as legal temporary workers) has in fact decreased over the last decade or so. What has increased (way out of proportion with the evidence) is the popular impression that the North is in a state of siege by the citizens of the South.

About three out of five international immigrants are found in the North. The overwhelming majority

All world regions now have significant numbers of foreign-born persons in their midst

of them have gotten there through legal channels or otherwise hold legal statuses. Many of the rest are in the North at the implicit "invitation" of some of the receiving societies' most powerful sectors (such as employers) and with at least some forbearance from the authorities. And even those in irregular situations tend to be among the most energetic and motivated young persons the South has available, that is, persons who are least likely to be a burden to the receiving society.

All world regions now have significant numbers of foreign-born persons in their midst, but origins and density vary widely both within and across regions. Oceania is the most "immigrant-dense" region, with about five million foreign-born persons (about one in five persons.) Next in immigrant density is the area in the Americas occupied by Canada and the United States, with about one immigrant in nine or ten persons (including irregulars).

Perhaps surprisingly for many Europeans, the European Union (EU)-*cum*-Switzerland now have a foreign-born population whose size is comparable to that of US/Canada, although the larger population of those 16 countries makes them less immigrant-dense as a whole—about one in eleven or twelve persons (including irregulars,again).

Inconvenient truths

Immigration to the remaining two world regions is overwhelmingly *intra*-regional. Asia has about one third or more of all international migrants. While the most immigrant-dense part of Asia by far is the Middle East, western and parts of southern Asia are teeming with refugees while south and southeast Asia are heavily engaged in most forms of international migration.

Finally, Africa, with about 10 per cent of all international migrants,may be the region with the greatest fluctuations in the size of that population. ►

There are no doors, there are only mirrors.

Octavio Paz
(1914-1998, Mexico)

This is partly because it is in Africa that most refugee-generating events have occurred in the last two decades, but also where some recent successful large-scale repatriations have taken place.Equally important,perhaps, are the traditions of temporary movements among neighbouring populations and the role of post-apartheid South Africa as a powerful magnet for citizens from throughout sub-Saharan Africa.

Considering the topic's political salience, it might be a good idea to close this essay with some "inconvenient"truths. The most important of these may be that notwithstanding the wishful thinking of some politicians and nationalist zealots in the North, the progress of their countries' formal economy toward the age of information makes self-sufficiency in many types of workers unrealistic—particularly when considering most of the North's demographic deficits and their attendant aging and social security solvency issues.

Filling thankless jobs

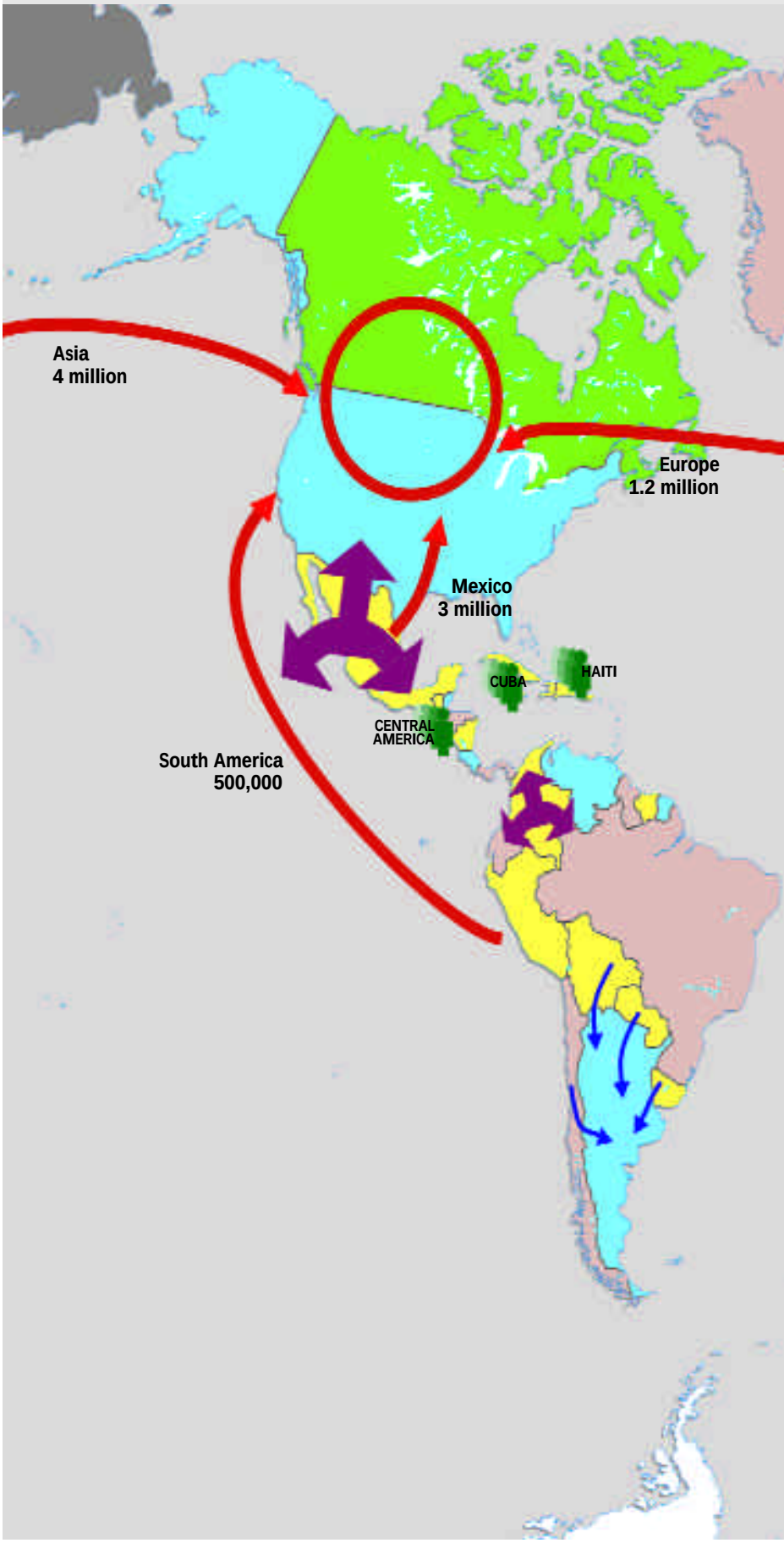
Furthermore, the North's march toward a high technology future will not eliminate the large complement of low-wage, difficult, seasonal, and socially undesirable jobs. Nor is the North likely to find the political courage either to compel its un- and under-employed to take these jobs or simply to surrender these jobs to the South. As a result, it might be better for the North to acknowledge that immigration provides its societies with prospective members who are eager to use such jobs as entry points to the North's economies and as access routes to the full rewards of its social and political systems.

And as this process results in more diverse populations, the next chapter in human progress—learning how to live in multi-ethnic societies that embrace ethnic, cultural, racial and religious differences and place clear priority on active integration policies—has an opportunity to be written. ■

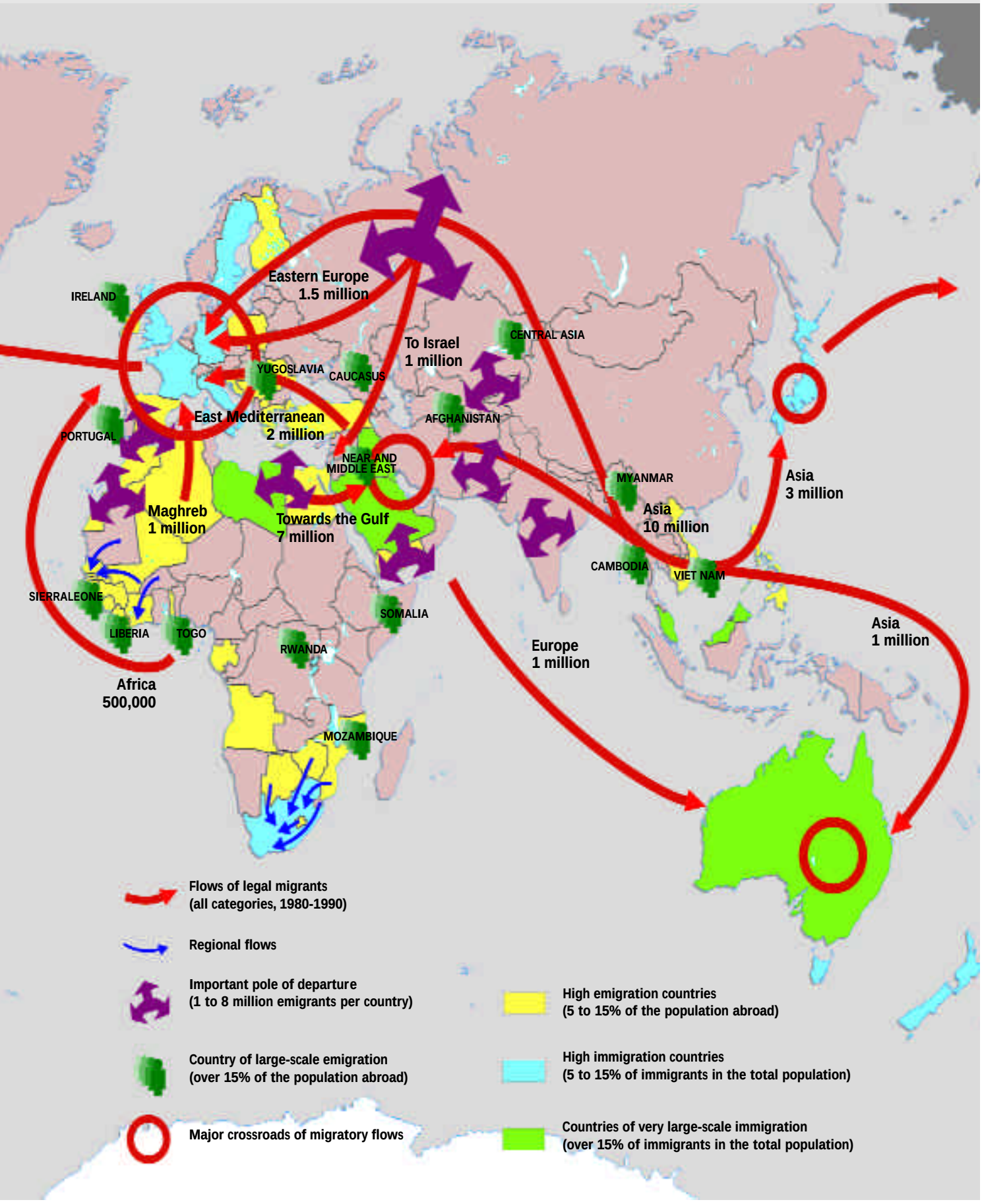
There has never been a greater disparity between freedom of movement and the wealth of means of locomotion.

Walter Benjamin
(1892-1940,Germany)

World migration



flows



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Countries or areas with the largest number of international immigrants* in 1990

Country or area	Number of immigrants	Percentage of total population
United States of America	19,602,725	7.88
France	5,897,370	10.43
Germany	5,037,072	6.36
Canada	4,265,626	15.45
Saudi Arabia	4,037,518	25.76
Australia	3,915,949	23.36
United Kingdom	3,718 295	6.49
Iran,Islamic Republic of	3,587,697	6.20
Côte-d'Ivoire	3,440,419	29.27
Hong Kong	2,271,226	39.99
Argentina	1,675,033	5.18
Italy	1,549,259	2.72

* Foreign-born persons. As a result of the division of India and Pakistan in 1947,these countries also have large numbers of foreign-born persons, with India having 8,659,775 (1.03% of the total population) and Pakistan 7,272,000 (6.07%).

Source: Trends in Total Migrant Stock, Population Division,United Nations, 1998

Countries or areas with the highest percentage of international immigrants* in the total population in 1990

Country or area	Number of immigrants	Percentage of total population
United Arab Emirates	1,478,191	90.18
Kuwait	1,503,265	71.69
Qatar	299,000	63.50
Macau	150,401	44.74
Hong Kong	2,271,226	39.99
Bahrain	169,223	35.12
Oman	574,600	33.56
Israel	1,426,785	30.91
Côte-d'Ivoire	3,440,419	29.27
Jordan	1,112,247	26.39
Saudi Arabia	4,037,518	25.76
Australia	3,915,949	23.36

* Foreign-born persons. This compilation does not take into consideration those countries or areas with low population (e.g.Christmas Island and Norfolk Island) and tax-haven countries (e.g.Andorra and Monaco) which, although having large percentages of foreign-born persons, are not concerned with the subject of this issue.

Source: Trends in Total Migrant Stock, Population Division,United Nations, 1998

Your country is wherever you feel good, Earth is a common home for mortals.

Robert Garnier (1545-1590,France)

Countries with the highest net number of emigrants* during the period 1980-1995

Country	Net number of emigrants
Mexico	4,446,000
Bangladesh	4,048,000
Philippines	2,962,000
China	2,429,000
Indonesia	2,400,000
Viet Nam	1,013,000
Sri Lanka	900,000
Former Yugoslavia	897,000
Zambia	750,000
Thailand	750,000
Colombia	750,000
Peru	745,000

*Estimates. Not included in this table are those countries with exceptionally large numbers of refugees. Afghanistan (2,572,000), Rwanda (1,750,000) and Somalia (950,000).

Source: Trends in Total Migrant Stock, Population Division,United Nations, 1998

Low wages, big transfers

Although they usually earn low wages, collectively immigrants manage to send substantial sums of money to their countries of origin. In fact, these countries generally receive more money from their citizens working abroad than they do in official development assistance (ODA).

Since the early 1990s, immigrants have been sending about $70 billion a year to their countries of origin by official channels, according to the International Monetary Fund, whereas official development assistance in 1996, for example, amounted to an estimated $58 billion. If it is calculated that each migrant helps five or six people at home, between 200 and 240 million people around the world depend on the support of friends or family members working abroad.

According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), immigrants' remittances represent an important source of foreign exchange for many developing countries. In Egypt, for example, financial transfers were the leading source of external revenue in the 1980s, bringing in as much money as tourism receipts and tolls paid on the Suez Canal. In Tunisia, they now represent about five per cent of gross domestic product,50 per cent of payments to service the national debt and 10 per cent of the balance of payments. In Yemen, official transfers from migrants amount to 150 per cent of export revenue, while the sums sent to Haiti account for six per cent of gross national product.

It is important to bear in mind that these calculations are based on official transactions—money sent through banks or post offices, as well as "institutional" transfers like retirement benefits sent to immigrants' home countries through governmental agreements. It is extremely difficult to make an accurate assessment of amounts sent through informal networks.

Immigrants also invest considerable sums on making purchases abroad and then sending them by various means to their countries of origin. These "exports", ranging from photocopy and fax machines bought to set up a business, to antibiotics and clothing—may equal or even surpass financial transfers. Migrants often also bring back from host countries managerial or technical skills, whose value is more difficult to calculate, along with new perspectives on issues like education and democracy, particularly with regard to women's rights and status. ■

© David Burnett/Contact Press Images, Paris

Cuban immigrants in the United States wait for their papers to be regularized.

Who goes where?

Gildas Simon*

A world-wide overview of immigration—host countries, numbers, ways and means, goals and traditions

The very word "hosting" is ambiguous when applied to immigrants, so many and varied are the ways of devising, practising and approaching the operation it purports to describe. A very wide range of situations and behaviour exists in the space between the formal opening of borders to foreigners and offering them a warm welcome, between official speeches and the attitude of the bureaucrat at the guichet, and between cultures and eras. How should we categorize the different "host countries", in the broadest sense of the term—that is, countries that receive immigrants?

The most obvious yardstick is numbers. This means either the annual number of legal entries into a country or the number of immigrants who have been there for some time. By this criterion, two countries stand out. First is the United States (720,000 entries in 1995, but 1.8 million in 1991, including 1.1 million whose status was regularized by a law passed in 1986). Germany comes a close second (800,000 in 1995, 1.2 million in 1991), and easily leads the European field where immigration is concerned. Next comes a group of countries (Canada, Japan, the United Kingdom, France, Australia and Israel), which take in an average of between 100,000 and 200,000 legal immigrants every year.

In terms of the number of resident aliens, the United States is again top of the list, with 24.6 million foreigners living in the country in 1996 (9.3% of the total population), just ahead of India (8.6 million in 1990, or 1% of its population), Pakistan (7.2 million or 6%) and Germany (7.1 million, 8.8%).

Another group is home to between two and four million immigrants—Australia (3.7 million in 1991, 22.3% of its population), Canada (4.3 million in 1991,16.1%), France (3.6 million in 1990, 6.3%), the United Kingdom (2 million in 1995, 3.4%), Saudi Arabia (4 million, 25.7% in 1990), Côte d'Ivoire (3.4 million, 29.7%) and Hong Kong (2.2 million,39.9%).

These percentages already show the wide variation in the proportion of foreigners to the local population. In some other countries, this proportion is very high. Top of the list are sparsely-populated, oil- ►

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rich countries where immigrants are actually in the majority—Qatar (63.7%), Kuwait (71.6%) and the United Arab Emirates (90.1% in 1990). The figures for Saudi Arabia, Bahrein, Oman, Brunei and Libya ranged from 25% to 35% in 1990.

A second group of countries with a high proportion of immigrants consists of very small countries, mainly Caribbean or Pacific islands or small states which often have some special status, such as being a tax haven. They include Luxembourg (37.8% foreigners), Macao (44.7%) and Monaco (67%).

A third category comprises very large but still sparsely populated "new countries", such as Canada and Australia (16% to 22%). Other possible members of this category are the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

A fourth group is made up of Western industrial democracies where the proportion of immigrants (much lower than generally supposed) is between three and 10%. This includes most member states of the European Union (those mentioned above plus Austria and Belgium: 9%, and Sweden and The Netherlands: 5%). The United States could also be added to this group. Switzerland, with 18.9% in 1995, stands out here, but its geographical position, history and fiscal policy perhaps suggest that it should belong to the second group.

Few states, including some of the major receiving countries, have ratified the international conventions dealing with the treatment of immigrants

The existence of a tradition of receiving immigrants creates another set of categories, with important implications for demography (age structure, fertility rate), administrative and legal status and economic, social and cultural integration. The list includes countries with both long-established and more recent pro-immigration policies, but also those states which have changed their policies in the past few years.

In the developed world, only a few countries have had pro-immigration policies for more than a century now. They are Germany, France, Switzerland and the so-called "new" countries "settled" by Europeans—countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States.

But some countries in the South have well-established pro-immigration policies too. Merchants and workers from India have long been received by the Sultanate of Oman, and people of the Sahel by Côte d'Ivoire. For the last century or more all Asian countries have taken in Chinese and Indian immigrants. On the other hand, there are the new host countries which have in many cases been surprised and alarmed to find themselves a magnet for immigration. Spain, Greece and Italy, as well as the oil states of the Gulf, the Republic of Korea and Thailand are undergoing this new experience, which partly explains why they find it hard to decide where they stand on this issue.

"Old" immigration countries which are today grappling with serious development problems have virtually shut the door on immigrants. They include Brazil, which has taken in several million from all over the world, and Argentina. Both of these countries even became, in the 1980s, notable sources of emigration to the United States or Europe.

Why do countries receive immigrants? This is one of the key questions which determines the attitude of governments and one of the things dividing them—at least in theory, since daily reality is much less clear cut. Advertising immigration policies is not really a government priority, and in the major immigration countries the job of receiving immigrants takes many different forms and involves complex and sometimes contradictory alliances.

However, three kinds of countries can be identified—those which mainly see immigrants as an extra or major source of labour, those which openly or implicitly allow immigrants to stay permanently, and those which take in immigrants for mainly humanitarian reasons.

The first group is easily the biggest: South Africa, the Gulf states, Gabon, the emerging economies of Asia and Japan until the recent financial crisis and most of Western Europe until the first oil crisis, in 1973-75.

The second group contains the "old" immigration countries listed earlier, plus Israel, for which the arrival of immigrants (in the sense understood by the Israelis) or the return of people who had left is of the greatest strategic importance. In this group, in contrast to the

Afghan refugees arrive in Moscow.

Blood and fears

One major problem facing long-term immigrants is that of acquiring the nationality of the country to which they emigrate and all the rights deriving from that status. When governments decide whether or not to grant such people citizenship, they apply two doctrines which have their origin in Roman law, one based on place of birth, the other on descent.

The first, known by its Latin name jus soli (literally "right of the soil") is applied by countries that are traditionally favourable to immigration. They regard all people born on their territory as citizens, whatever their parents' nationality. This model, of which Sweden, the United States, Canada and France are examples, is based on the conviction that cultural diversity is not an obstacle to integration.

The second model, which goes by the name of jus sanguinis, or "blood right", grants nationality in accordance with the principle of descent. A child of immigrants who is born in the country where his or her parents live does not enjoy the new nationality but has to take their nationality. This principle binds the family to its country of origin and seeks to maintain this link from one generation to the next. The blood right principle operates in Japan, for example, and is also applied by countries which have traditionally sent large numbers of people abroad, wish to avoid a sharp drop in population and, in some cases, want to make it easier for people to return.

The two principles are not mutually exclusive. For example, a country trying to restrict the inflow of immigrants will endeavour to set aside jus soli in favour of jus sanguinis and thus deter immigrants from gaining the impression that, on arriving in the country, they are automatically guaranteed nationality both for themselves and for their descendants. Obviously care has to be taken when such changes in direction are made, because enjoyment of a country's nationality clearly offers political, economic and social advantages, and attempts to restrict them may trigger protest. ■

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first one,the place of immigrants in the society, their legal status and their acquisition of nationality are issues of central importance and have given rise to extensive legislation.

The countries acting for humanitarian reasons have agreed to open their borders to large numbers of refugees who have been forced to leave their own country either by a natural disaster or more often because of war. More than a million Mozambicans caught up in a civil war and plagued with famine found refuge in neighbouring Malawi, one of the world's poorest countries, between 1975 and 1992. There are still five million Afghans in Pakistan and Iran. And despite the present closing of most borders, many countries have fulfilled this humanitarian role one way or another at some time in their recent history.

A cold reception

As for the yardstick of quality, the handling of immigration and treatment of immigrants are extremely sensitive matters. They can be measured against the words of the Bible: "I was a stranger and you took me in." These words ring in the moral conscience of many countries both North and South, but they do not seem to be really understood and put into practice. Few states, including some of the major receiving countries,have ratified the international conventions dealing with the treatment of immigrants.

Without knowing the exact legal situation of immigrants in every country, we can still draw a rough picture of how things are. A first group contains those countries which say openly that they welcome immigrants and back up this commitment with a sizeable array of laws and other measures to facilitate the long-term or permanent settlement of new arrivals. These are Australia, Canada and Sweden. In some ways, Israel belongs to this group too, but it chooses immigrants on a religious or cultural basis.

A second group consists of those countries which in practice receive immigrants but where the reception is tempered by frequent displays of mistrust or discrimination, especially towards the most recent arrivals. This happens in most immigration countries in the West. Their geographical position, and very often their colonial past, the attraction of their economic and cultural vitality and the power of their media, the quality of their social and educational systems—all these factors draw to them the migrants of an increasingly nomadic and interconnected planet.

But such a trend causes confusion and sparks resistance by a section of society. Most countries do not want to admit, much less advertise, their openness to immigration, so in practice they find it very difficult to come up with clear and coherent policies where immigration and integration are concerned.So their laws on the matter are wobbly and sometimes contradictory.

Subject to the whims of the authorities

A foreigner who arrives legally often gets greeted, in effect, with folded arms. However,even though immigrants may not find themselves in the El Dorado or paradise they dreamed of, they do get some social and legal protection which enables them to plan a future for themselves and their children. The situation of illegal immigrants is much tougher however.

Immigrants in the main receiving countries of the South (Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the Gulf) experience even more precarious conditions. Their status is uncertain, they are totally dependent on their employers and are subject to the whims of the authorities and the absence of legal recourse. This often results in large-scale summary deportations of undocumented aliens. Those in this third group are much more vulnerable because of the economic crisis,especially in Africa and Asia.

This world overview, inevitably a schematic one, passes no judgment on the validity of this or that country's policies, each one of which may have its own rationale and justification. But it shows the very wide variety of situations immigrants find themselves in and also the broad range of attitudes of those receiving them.

As globalization of movement and trade advances, along with increasing links everywhere which facilitate international mobility, and with the arrival in a growing number of countries of new and culturally different populations, the age-old question of how to "welcome the stranger", which has so many implications and such symbolic meaning, has become more urgent than ever. ■

When his boat
landed in
the new world.
He saw a crowd of
unknown people
on the bank.
And great stars
in the sky.
They asked him
what he was
carrying.
He unfastened his
bundle and held out
a clod of earth.
They snatched it
from his hands and
it spilled.
He wept.
It's my homeland,
he said.
And all night long
he gathered it up.
To the last crumb,
the last grain.

Ante Popovski
(born 1930,
Republic of Macedonia)

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Eternal scapegoats

Antonio Cruz*

Indonesian immigrants look out through the port-holes of a ship on their way back to their country after being deported from Malaysia.

Vulnerable and 'different', immigrants are easy targets when their host countries experience hard times

No major industrialized country can in good faith deny the contribution of immigrant labour to its prosperity, not even "impenetrable" Japan with its some 300,000 clandestine workers. Hardly any of their construction projects could have materialized without immigrant labour. Nevertheless, despite today's fast pace of globalization, increasing migration movements and the accelerating tendency towards cosmopolitan societies, immigrant workers are still perpetual and universal scapegoats, no more shielded in this respect than their predecessors a century ago.

The intensity of exploitation and rejection may have diminished in certain countries, but as always the immigrant worker is only admitted to so-called "host countries" in order to satisfy labour demand and later discarded, very often like a paper handkerchief which has served its purpose.Even people of immigrant origin may take part in this rejection; those who have once been exploited can themselves become formidable exploiters. The human reality of immigration continues to be neglected. The migrant worker is seen as nothing more than "human capital", and more as "capital" than "human".This is so both in developing countries,largely because of the present economic crisis, and in the industrialized countries, including former sending countries, because of the upsurge of nationalism.

Since the economic turmoil in Southeast Asia began in mid-1997, Thailand has expelled some 250,000 immigrant workers, South Korea has "leniently"allowed 50,000 illegal immigrants to leave the country instead of fining or imprisoning them, and Malaysia has already deported some 50,000 Indonesian workers, granting a two-month amnesty as from 1 September 1998 for illegal workers to leave the country voluntarily or face sanctions. These numbers do not include those who migrated internally, from the rural areas to the cities, and have now been forced to return to their villages.

Immigrant workers in Africa have not been spared.One of the more recent examples is that of South Africa, which after having succeeded in putting an end to the apartheid regime,intensified its fight against clandestine immigrants whose labour was no longer required.Between 1992 and 1995, South Africa expelled almost 400,000 African workers, mainly Mozambicans whose government had played such an active role against apartheid.(See pages 28-29).

Contributing more than they receive

In industrialized countries, globalization has provoked, inter alia, the development of nationalism, supported largely by those who have become marginalized, unable to keep up with increasing competitiveness. Faced with an increasing mass of discontented citizens, politicians in search of electoral themes choose the easy way out. It is more difficult to get across to the public complicated explanations of economic theory, global trade and financial markets than it is to to attack new arrivals, depriving them of access to social security programmes so that "savings" thus made may be used to aid the poor nationals. Meanwhile, in all the industrialized countries, immigrants' contributions to social protection systems are higher than the benefits they receive.

Once considered to be the exclusive capital of the far right, the use of immigrants as scapegoats is now tempting other parties across the spectrum, from the right to the left. The United States, the world's most powerful industrialized nation, which owes its prosperity and very existence to the arrival of waves of immigrants, is not exempt. The situation is even more absurd in Australia, a continent of

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immigration located in the Asia-Pacific region, where the immigrant scapegoat is designated by his or her colour and ethnicity. Pauline Hanson's anti-immigrant party does not point the finger at European immigrants, mostly of modest background, but rather at Asians who have generally poured substantial investment into the country and at Aborigines whose ancestors lived in Australia well before the arrival of immigrant settlers, including the ancestors of Ms Hanson's supporters. (See article page 33). However, the target may not only not be a foreigner, but be of the same "colour" and "ethnic group" as his or her attackers: in June 1989 a southern Italian was beaten to death in Verona by a group of northerners. Very often, in Africa for example, there is nothing physical or cultural to distinguish an attacked immigrant from his or her attackers.

The mechanism is immutable and implacable:

In all the industrialized countries, immigrants' contributions to social protection systems are higher than the benefits they receive

a culprit—even an imaginary one—for the difficulties afflicting a country must always be found. When there is no foreigner to fit the bill, the mechanism acts against those who are considered different (see the history of Jewish communities) or vulnerable (women). But immigrants are easy targets because they are particularly vulnerable as well as being "different". They are generally not allowed to vote. In developing countries, shifting the blame on immigrants is easy because of the weakness or absence of democratic institutions to uphold their rights. In industrialized countries it is no more difficult to incite public opinion against immigrants by invoking the right of freedom of expression, despite the fact that exercise of this right may jeopardize their fundamental rights.

Steps towards progress in the social field and in fundamental and legal rights of immigrants now seem to have come to a halt, and the timid achievements realized so far are threatened. After ten years of arduous negotiations within the United Nations, its General Assembly finally approved on 18 December 1990 the new International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (Resolution 45/158). This is the first-ever international instrument with a broad definition of the rights of migrant workers which offers some means to ensure compliance with the provisions by contracting states.

Twenty states must ratify the convention before it can come into force. Almost eight years later, only nine states have done so (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cape Verde, Colombia, Egypt, Morocco, the Philippines, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Uganda) and two (Chile and the initiating state, Mexico) have only signed it. Not one "host country" is on the list. In the meantime, migrant workers may rely essentially on two limited instruments of the International Labour Organisation, namely the Migration for Employment Convention (Revised) of 1949, ratified by forty-one states, and its supplementary provisions approved in 1975, which have been ratified by eighteen states.

A return ticket for the baker

A well-known cartoon shows a Frenchman who accused foreign workers of "stealing the bread" of French people and was unable to buy bread one morning because his baker, of immigrant origin, had returned to his home country. This once actually happened in the French city of Montbéliard.

In 1979-1980, about 35 per cent of the foreign workers living in Montbéliard's twenty-three satellite towns, affected by the declining automobile industry, accepted the French Government's offer of a "return premium". Nowhere else in France was the acceptance rate so high and the consequences were disastrous: schools had to close down because of insufficient pupils, and many shops, restaurants and other businesses had to stop trading for lack of clients. This example clearly shows that foreign workers are not merely providers of labour. They and their families are also indispensable components of the society in which they live and have their own role to play. ■

Racism always rears its head when the economic system is working badly.

Desmond Tutu
(b. 1931, South Africa)

Xenophobic voices

'Our people first!" (Belgium), "Out with the filth!" (Austria), "Hungarians are like Aids!" (Romania), "France for the French!" (France).

With only slight variations, all far right-wing political parties hammer away with the same slogan: expel immigrants and everything will be better. The message, which has the merit of simplicity, have proved attractive to many. Such ideas have contaminated a sizeable number of voters in Austria, Italy, France, the Flemish part of Belgium, Denmark and the Czech Republic, where nationalist parties are doing better and better at the polls. At recent elections, they have been getting between 10 and 20 per cent of the vote, often entering government, at least at the local level. They are also gaining ground in the former communist countries, including what was once East Germany. For the moment, however, they have made no headway in Spain or the United Kingdom.

Europe may be the world's current stronghold of the organized far right, but sadly—as the case of Australia shows—it has no monopoly on xenophobic ideologies. Racist ideas seem to be among the world's most widely-shared, manifesting themselves in a multitude of ways.

In the United States, which has taken in more than 55 million immigrants since 1820, there is a growing number of organizations which, like the Ku Klux Klan, campaign for white supremacy; nearly 150 of them are thought to exist today. And the mainstream Republican Party sometimes takes an anti-immigrant line worthy of some nationalist parties in Europe. An example was Bob Dole's presidential campaign in California in 1996.

Elsewhere in the world—in some African and Asian countries, for example—governments have no problem adopting extreme right-wing policies, deporting thousands of people at times of economic crisis. Meanwhile, it is a remarkable fact that three Latin American countries—Peru, Ecuador and Argentina—have in recent years elected presidents of immigrant origin. ■

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Illegal immigrants being deported on a South African train.

Last train to El Dorado?

Confronted with a serious economic crisis and mounting xenophobia, South Africa is up against the need for a new immigration policy

The train and the migrant have become indivisible through time in South Africa. Songs and lore feature the trains which brought the first migrant workers to South Africa in the early twentieth century from the neighbouring countries of Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Lesotho.

Millions of miners have come to dig gold from the mines which burrow deep into the earth, and many other migrants have tilled and coaxed fruit from the soil in South Africa's northern provinces. For decades, South Africa's wealth has relied on the labour it imports from other African countries.

Under apartheid, migration policy was used to encourage white immigrants to come to the country to shore up the numbers of the ruling minority. They were given incentives to locate here and many non-governmental organizations were established to help them settle. Most white South Africans carry dual citizenship.

On the other hand, black labourers were brought in on contract to keep the mines and the farms going—the mining and agricultural sectors are two of the biggest contributors to the gross domestic product. But with the demand for gold drying up, the lacklustre sales figures have meant that hundreds of thousands of miners from across the region have been retrenched.

There is a surfeit of local unskilled labour in South Africa, yet thousands still flock in from the region every day in search of a living. The country is far wealthier than other countries in the region—it is responsible for 83 per cent of the regional gross national product. On top of this, many believe that South Africa has a political responsibility to contribute to the development of southern Africa because of past policies to destabilize neighbouring countries.

Xenophobia in needy districts

These immigrants show that South Africa has joined the heaving global movement of humanity in search of a better life. It is a receiver nation: from Somalia and Morocco, car-loads of immigrants make the hostile twenty-day trip loaded down with goods to sell. Ghanaians have entered the retail business with flair, introducing new fashions to the tip of the continent. Nigerians have set up cocaine cartels, joining an Italian and Eastern European mafia long-established on these shores. Taiwanese run the poaching businesses in the fishing industry and women from nearby Mozambique and faraway Manila sell their bodies in the city streets.

These people have become an easy target for South Africans who toil in a country of grinding poverty, growing joblessness and a declining economy. As with many countries in the world, the xenophobia is worse in poor, working-class areas.

Street battles in Johannesburg where local

'These people carry diseases which they spread around and infect us'

hawkers chase and confiscate the goods of African and Asian hawkers have grown in the past four years. Vigilantes attack migrants in the inner cities and in the shack lands.

The derogatory term *makwerekwere*—a crude onomatopoeic imitation of how foreigners speak—is used to describe foreigners as "those we don't understand", and newspapers abound with the fiery rhetoric of xenophobes. "These people carry diseases which they spread around and they infect us," said a young shop-owner in Alexandra township, a poor area near Johannesburg. Others complain that "They take our jobs" and "are willing to work for less than us." The xenophobia has become so dangerous that some describe it as an epidemic which has become endemic.

Yet studies show that many foreigners are here on legal visitors' permits, others are employing South Africans in street and formal businesses and most don't want to make this country their permanent home. Still the myths persist. A local survey found that about four in five respondents thought the South African government is too soft on foreigners. South Africa's different ethnic groups were at one in their belief that government should batten down the hatches and get tough with foreigners.

A conundrum for government

This populist push is fueling government action. Many immigrants try to enter the country illegally through the vast Kruger National Park in the north. In the past six years, an army unit which only polices illegal immigrants has caught 17,000 people trying to enter the country. Most are from South Africa's neighbouring states, although the statistics show that Taiwanese, Pakistani and Eastern Europeans have also been arrested. Existing immigration laws have criminalized between two and five million people thought to be living in the country illegally.

South African Home Affairs Minister Mangosuthu Buthelezi, who is responsible for migration, would like to receive a much greater slice of the nation's budget for policing the borders, and is on record as saying that the country is at risk from foreigners who run criminal syndicates, prostitution rings and deal in contraband. But his policy papers have been fine tuned and written in the knowledge that South Africa cannot win a place in the global economy by adhering to the "fortress South Africa" school of migration policy. In fact, establishing a new migration policy for the country presents government with a conundrum: the middle path lies somewhere between open borders and "fortress South Africa" and defining that path is still very much a work in progress.

The government is looking toward a special arrangement with the other countries in southern Africa and moving eventually toward open borders. But this is a long way off. A 1995 draft agreement to throw open borders was given the thumbs-down by government. Instead, a more cautious version advocating a phased instead of a big bang approach was written in 1997.

The Gulf: a private contract

When a businessman in the Gulf wants some workers or a family wants a maid, the routine is always the same. One of the many specialized agencies with contacts in countries of emigration will organize everything in exchange for a commission. The agency will interview the candidates, have them sign a contract whose terms have been agreed with their future employer, obtain all the necessary documents from the country of origin and the country they are going to, and make all the travel arrangements.

Since the employer has advanced the entire cost of bringing the immigrant worker to the Gulf, he wants to be sure of recuperating his investment. So as soon as new employees arrive, they usually hand over their passport to their employer. This means they can neither return home before the end of their contract nor legally get a job with another employer who might offer better pay or conditions.

This sums up the agreement between employer and immigrant worker. Its terms and how it is respected are a private matter and the two sides are clearly not on an equal footing. The international press has often reported on abuses of this dependence.

The percentage of immigrant workers in the total population is also the highest in the world in the Gulf—at least 60 per cent everywhere and as much as 90 per cent in the United Arab Emirates. The first wave of immigrants consisted mainly of other Arabs—Egyptians, Lebanese, Palestinians and Yemenis—who worked as civil servants, especially in the education and health sectors.

With the oil boom in the 1970s, a second wave of immigrants—legal and illegal—came from Asia and to a lesser extent from North Africa. Much less qualified, they mostly became domestic servants, small traders and unskilled or partly skilled workers.

The original inhabitants of the Gulf were meanwhile gaining educational qualifications and pushing for jobs to go with their new status. The collapse in oil prices hit the private sector and government jobs very hard, and some of the region's security services saw the situation as a time tomb. So the Gulf states began to fill jobs with their own citizens and to "regulate" immigration.

This affected first the illegal immigrants, who had been tolerated until then. Now they were either given legal documents or expelled. The data on this are both fragmentary and contested. Official sources say 160,000 foreign workers have left the Gulf states since 1996, but observers put the figure as high as half a million.

Some 24,000 officially left Oman between January and April this year. Qatar reports a little over 14,000 "regularizations" and nearly 4,000 repatriations over nine months. Neighbouring Saudi Arabia announced last July that it had deported more than 800,000 illegal immigrants since October 1997, most of whom had slipped into the country at the time of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. ■

In the meantime, the migrant and the train are still indivisible. Except that now the trains are used to deport illegal immigrants out of South Africa. They shunt the desperate and the destitute back to their home countries in dingy carriages, dumping them like unwanted surplus at the borders from whence they came.

South Africa has a new refugee policy in line with United Nations standards; its migration policies for citizens from the rest of the world will move increasingly toward letting in only those the country needs. It is suffering a brain drain with the loss of key skills like those of doctors, dentists, engineers and information technology specialists. New policies will seek to create instead a brain gain by "headhunting" talent to come to South Africa.

In the meantime, the tide of xenophobia is swelling. It is a violent tide but one which appears impotent in the face of the thousands of new residents (legal and illegal) who arrive here every day. They have turned the country into a veritable salad of nationalities. Together with older immigrant communities, they ensure that this is a world in one country. ■

The black child and the white child both have red blood.

Pierre Osenet (b. 1908, Martinique)

The Italian exception

Italy, once a notable source of emigrants, has become a magnet for immigrants in the last 20 years

© David Turnley/Black Star/Studio B, Limours

Many immigrants have found work in an economy with a large informal sector.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character.

Martin Luther King (1929-1968,United States) Speech in Washington, D.C., 1963

A few months ago Italy's Minister of the Interior, Giorgio Napolitano, told parliament that "Italy has a vocation as a country of immigration." This is an ironic twist of history. For over a century Italians emigrated on a massive scale, but during the last twenty years the situation has been reversed as hundreds of thousands of people have come to Italy in search of a job and a new life.

They started to arrive in the early 1980s. Women came from Eritrea, where a war was on, and Cape Verde, looking for work as domestic servants. Then the smiling faces of North African café waiters and cooks began to appear in cities like Rome and Milan. Egyptian workers could be spotted in the foundries of Emilia Romagna. In 1986, when the Italian parliament passed for the first time a law protecting the rights of workers from outside the European Community, the number of these workers was put at 500,000, out of a total population of 57 million Italians.

The arrival of these newcomers signaled the start of a new trend in a country which had, regional disparities notwithstanding, become prosperous. In the mid-1970s,the other European nations closed their doors to immigration,whereas Italy adopted no specific measures to regulate a phenomenon that was still new. The country also looked with a different eye at its informal "underground"economy in which family members sometimes employed one another, taxes were avoided and black market labour was often used. Immigrant workers—flexible and easily-exploited labour—found a place in that market. They worked in homes, restaurants,stores,services,construction, farming and, little by little, small- and medium-sized companies.

Immigration became a socially recognized phenomenon. At the same time it stirred controversy and in some cases triggered xenophobic reactions. On the one hand, associations were set up to defend immigrants' rights; on the other, there were outbursts of racism, as in 1989 when a gang of young delinquents near Naples murdered an African farm labourer. The killing galvanized public opinion and the government decided to draft a new bill concerning immigration, the status of foreigners and their social rights. The bill became law in 1990 and enabled some 200,000 foreigners to obtain residence permits.

Last summer, around 200 clandestine immigrants landed on the Sicilian coast, giving rise to talk of an 'illegal alien emergency'

A country to which people come

Italy now has around one million officially registered immigrant workers. A government report published in June 1998 put the number of undocumented aliens at between 200,000 and 300,000. The immigrants hail from an increasing number and variety of places, including the Mediterranean basin, China and the Indian sub-continent. In decreasing order, the largest communities are from Morocco, the Philippines, Tunisia, the People's Republic of China, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Poland, Romania and other East European countries. Recent years have seen an increase in the number of undocumented aliens from the former Yugoslavia and Albania, a direct consequence of war and unrest in the Balkans. The report also says that "some communities have stabilized considerably", citing the growing number of children and the increasing rate of family re-unification.

Italy is still adapting to its new situation as a country to which people come rather than leave. For years informal networks made up of the foreign communities themselves, private support groups, organizations and a few local authorities organized the reception of immigrants. Today the initiatives they launched are often being taken up by government agencies. In the field of health care, for example,a new figure has emerged—the "cultural

mediator", who speaks the language and is familiar with the culture of the individual concerned, and offers his or her services as a go-between to facilitate access to health care. There have also been attempts to integrate foreign pupils through multicultural education. In 1996 a little over 50,000 children, or six per cent of the resident foreign population, were enrolled in Italy's elementary and middle schools. School is the most effective tool for successful integration and the key to peaceful co-existence.

An immigration law passed by the Italian parliament in March 1998 established for the first time a coherent legal framework governing admission to Italy and the renewal of expired residence permits. Extremely complicated, if not entirely inapplicable, laws had previously encouraged immigrants not to apply for papers. Anyone who has legally lived in Italy for five years or more is now eligible for a residence permit, which is valid for an unlimited length of time and frees its bearer from eternal "guest" status as well as from the trouble of renewing a permit that has expired. The government is requested to set annual admissions quotas in consultation with the regions and government agencies concerned. In early 1998 the quota was set at approximately 20,000 people but by June the Ministry of Labour had already recorded 34,000 requests.

At the same time, as a member of the European Union's Schengen group Italy must apply strict rules concerning expulsion, turning back foreigners at the border and fighting illegal immigration. Last summer around 200 clandestine immigrants who had paid an unscrupulous trafficker a high price for the trip over in a boat landed on the Sicilian coast, giving rise to talk about an "illegal alien emergency". It was as if, at the sight of these bewildered travelers, baggage in hand and hearts full of hope, Italians had forgotten their old family pictures of their grandfathers leaving home with a

¡Buenos días California!

Harry P. Pachon*

It is time to debunk the myths surrounding California's large and growing Latino immigrant population

California: land of Hollywood, Silicon Valley, Disneyland and movie stars—this has been the popular conception of the names and symbols associated with the US's largest state for the better part of this century. Yet there is another California which co-exists alongside this glamorous and popular image. Cities like Monterey Park, Huntington Park and areas like East Los Angeles are the new ports of entry for immigrants from Mexico, Central America, Asia and the rest of the world. This less glamorous aspect of California is not as well known. Nonetheless, the ways in which California adapts and adjusts to being the first home of new immigrants will be critical in the twenty-first century for the state's future, and perhaps for the future of the United States. Most notably, California will give the country a glimpse of the future as it moves from a bi-racial (black/white) understanding of minority issues to a multi-cultural perspective that encompasses predominantly Latinos as well as Asian Americans and African Americans.

Historically, the United States has defined minority group concerns in terms of a black and white dynamic. Yet in California the black community is actually the smallest of the minority populations. Latinos and Asians, both native-born and immigrant, are the largest minorities in the state. And this trend will continue. The Latino population[1] in California is growing ten times as fast as the African American community and twice as fast as the Asian American community.

Consider these additional facts. California, with 27 million inhabitants, is the USA's most populous state and has the world's seventh largest economy. It is also a state with incredible ethnic diversity: in 1990 there were over six million foreign-born immigrants living there. The number of Mexican immigrants living in Los Angeles County could make it the third largest Mexican metropolitan area outside of Mexico. Moreover, there are over half a million Salvadorians and Guatemalans also living in southern California. According to the US Census, there are also over two million immigrants from Asian countries living in the state, the largest of them, the Chinese and Korean, numbering over 200,000 each.

Kosher burritos, pupuserias and Chinese seafood

These immigrants and native-born Americans provide a richness of cultures that are blending and coalescing in ways that are not yet fully clear. For example, you can eat "kosher burritos[2]" in downtown Los Angeles and Salvadorian restaurants featuring "pupuserias[3]" co-exist alongside Chinese seafood eateries. Los Angeles city schools teach bilingual classes in Armenian as well as Spanish. In Los Angeles there are two Asian language and three Spanish ▶

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The state of California has passed an initiative that would eliminate bilingual education for immigrant children.

language television stations. One Spanish language television evening news show has a larger audience than any English language television station. The entrepreneurial vitality of California is constantly enriched thanks to a blend of Asian capital and the large Latin American labour force.

Yet the presence and magnitude of such a large immigrant population has created a backlash among native California voters, most of whom are neither of Latin American nor Asian descent. In the 1990s, California has had statewide votes on initiatives that would deny schooling and other social services to children of undocumented immigrants. Most recently, the state passed an initiative that would eliminate bilingual education for immigrant children.

94% of Mexican Americans born in the United States are proficient in English

The basis for these initiatives has been largely driven by the negative stereotypes surrounding immigrants from Mexico and Central America. According to these stereotypes, Mexican and Central American immigrants are predominantly illegal, do not fully participate in the labour force and are not adapting to American culture by not learning English.

The facts present a different picture. According to the US Immigration and Naturalization Service, immigrants from Latin America have constituted over 30 per cent of the entire number of immigrants to the United States in the past three decades. The primary destination of these legal immigrants from Mexico and Central America has been California. For example, close to 50 per cent of all Mexican immigrants list California as their destination. When one looks at the percentage of immigrants participating in the labour force, the facts also contradict the stereotypes. Mexican and Central American immigrants have labour force participation (62 per cent) that equals, if not exceeds, that of the white non-Hispanic labour force and far exceeds that of native African Americans. A number of other facts help explain the Latino immigrant community in California.

Firstly, it is a complex community. The city of Los Angeles was founded in 1781 by Spain. Some Latinos, albeit a small minority in California, can trace their ancestry in the United States back over many generations. Most of California's Latinos are recent immigrants, however. Over half of the state's Latino adult population is foreign-born.

Secondly, Latino communities are composed of both native-born and immigrants, but outside observers tend to confuse the two groups. Specifically, outside observers look at an ethnic enclave like East Los Angeles and see a profusion of both written and spoken Spanish. Some conclude from their observations that Latino immigrants don't want to learn English. Again, the facts show a different picture. The English language acquisition rate among Hispanic immigrants is roughly the same as those of other US immigrant groups. Among Mexican Americans born in the United States, 94 per cent are English proficient; amongst the foreign-born only 51 per cent are English proficient. In fact, one out of every three Latino immigrants is monolingual in English.

Putting down roots

The explanation for this is simple. Many legal immigrants come to the US as children, and although they speak Spanish in the home, they speak English in school and at work. As time goes on, they gradually lose proficiency in their native language and come to rely on their acquired language. The other two-thirds of the immigrants list their language proficiencies in the following ways: one-third were monolingual in Spanish and one-third were bilingual. By the third generation, Hispanic immigrants are overwhelmingly fluent in English.

Outsiders often tend to think that Mexican and Central American immigrants are only interested in saving enough money to go back home. Once again, the facts dispute this popular perception. When legal immigrants were asked in a national survey if they planned to stay in the US, an overwhelming nine out of ten said yes; 98 per cent of Latino immigrants feel life is better in the US than it is back in their home country.[4] Of course, some do return home; some also send back money orders to their relatives. But as time goes by, the roots become deeper, their attachments more firm. In short, they follow the same patterns as earlier European immigrants.

The future of Mexican, Central American and other Latin Americans in California is clear. Given their numbers, and the larger family sizes of Latin immigrants, this population will continue to increase dramatically. One generation from now, in the year 2020, there will be as many Californians of Latino descent (25 million) as there are Latinos living in the entire US at present. California's future is inextricably linked with that of its large Latino

1. *Latino* is a term used to designate persons living in the United States who can trace their ancestry to Spanish-speaking countries of the Western hemisphere. *Author*
2. *Burritos*, a Mexican speciality, are tortillas folded over a filling of minced beef and cheese.
3. Pancakes stuffed with cheese.
4 Harry Pachon and Louis DeSipio, *Americans by choice*. 1985, Westview Press.

The threatened dream

Australia's policy of migration diversity has become a political hot potato

Zero immigration—the call of Pauline Hanson's One Nation party—is threatening the dreams of thousands of potential settlers to Australia, a country that once opened its arms wide to people seeking a new way of life.

The threat took shape with Hanson's message that "We are in danger of being swamped by Asians", delivered in her maiden speech to Australia's Federal Parliament two years ago. Since then it has escalated to the point where the party she leads won a quarter of the votes in a recent state election and threatens the strongholds of the existing parties.

Australia has been proud of its population diversity over the last 25 years since it changed its restrictive immigration policy (the White Australia policy) to one that is non-discriminatory. The country now draws on people from 150 countries as settlers.

Subject to a yearly quota, the policy allows anyone from any country to apply to migrate regardless of their ethnic origin, sex, colour or religion. Whether or not an applicant is accepted as a settler depends on a points score that takes into account English language ability, skills and family links and support.

Today about one in four Australians was born overseas. About five per cent of them were born in Asian countries, 6.2 per cent in the United Kingdom, 6.8 per cent elsewhere in Europe and 1.2 per cent in the Middle East and North Africa.

Since the Second World War a total of 5.6 million people have migrated to Australia. Under prevailing policies migration is projected to help increase Australia's population from the present 18.5 million to 23 million in 50 years time.

The government has responded to the One Nation Party with a major national campaign to sell its immigration policy. The Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, Philip Ruddock, has travelled the nation making it clear there is "no place for racism in Australia". The question, he says, is "not how do we stop migration, but how do we manage it to gain the best outcomes for Australia."

Opposition to Pauline Hanson's policies has been loud and vocal, and community support for migration diversity has come strongly from diverse and influential sources. A joint statement by the employer, labour, religious and social welfare groups spelt it out: "We Australians should be proud of the way in which migrants have transformed, strengthened, and enriched our nation economically, socially and culturally."

The One Nation party draws on the growing resentment of some Australians who see newcomers taking "their" jobs in a contracting workforce in an economy increasingly affected by the Asian downturn, taking "their" places at the overcrowded universities and defrauding the government benefits system.

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An Australian doctor of Chinese and Aboriginal origin.

Environmental groups and the political parties that represent them are also calling for reduced immigration. They want Australia to determine its "carrying capacity"—just how many people the country can continue to sustain without further polluting its land, beaches, rivers and waterways and endangering its rare plants, birds and animals.

In response to some of these criticisms the government has begun to tighten up the conditions under which migration applicants will be successful by allocating 50 per cent of places to skilled people, and by clamping down on those who overstay their visas, work illegally and exploit the appeal procedures to prolong their illegal residence or abuse the welfare system.

The chairman of the Federation of Ethnic Affairs Council of Australia, Randolph Alwis, is critical of the government's "pandering to extreme elements" in Australia. By accenting skills and English language ability, Australia is in effect applying indirect discrimination, he says, thereby excluding highly desirable migrants. Some of Australia's business leaders of today arrived in Australia without a word of English, he points out.

"There are a lot of cases of highly skilled people, who because of systemic prejudices, are unable to get jobs straight away. They are going through a lot of hardships because, under government policies, they get no social benefits for two years," he says.

"Other countries are paying a lot of attention to our immigration policy," he warns. "People who have a choice, who have the skill and knowledge will choose to go to other countries that don't have these restrictions." ■

Robin Smith in Sydney

A national culture cannot be born anywhere—and here's the paradox—without intensive international contacts and exchanges.

Urho Kaleva Kekonnen (1900-1986, Finland)

© Patrick Ardinian/Contact Press Images, Paris

A 1993 Paris demonstration against a law restricting access to French nationality.

Immigration policy in

Economic globalization may encourage—or even force—the states of the North to get together and frame enlightened multilateral immigration policies

Immigration is increasingly seen in terms of threats. The prevalent image of this threat in the developed countries of the North is one of mass invasion by hundreds of millions of poor from around the world. The overarching response in these countries is to militarize their borders and to maximize policing inside them. Immigration thus becomes suffused in a mentality of national crisis, and unilateral sovereign action emerges as the only effective response.

This is of course not the first time in the history of the twentieth century that immigration has been portrayed as threatening and that there has been a clamour for strong unilateral state action. But today the context has radically changed. States have been forced by major economic trends to approach more and more matters multilaterally. Unilateral strongman tactics in military operations are less acceptable in international fora and are generally seen as less effective than multilateral approaches. For the first time innovations in international law have subjected national states to supranational authorities.

The context is also radically different when it comes to the use of policing as a key approach to more effective immigrant regulation. Today far more civil rights instruments are available to judges and there is a growing trend towards the constitutionalizing of civil rights in both the United States and in Europe. There are also far more human rights instruments available to judges and they are much more likely to be used than was the case even ten years ago.

Finally, there is a sharpening sense of the concept of civil society. Strategic sectors of the citizenry, especially in the United States, have asserted their right to criticize and even take to court various government agencies, most particularly police agencies. These conditions contrast sharply with the call for stronger police action vis à vis immigrants. When the object of stronger police action is a broad spectrum of people—immigrant women, men and children—sooner or later it will get caught in the expanding web of civil and human rights, it will violate those rights and interfere with the functioning of civil society.

In the United States, for example, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) can now excercise its police authority on individuals

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The author has given a fuller treatment of the subject of this article in chapters 2, 3 and 4 of her book Globalization and its Discontents (New Press, New York, 1998).

merely suspected of being unauthorized immigrants. If my son decided to go write the great American novel by spending time with farm workers or in garment sweatshops, and there was an INS raid, he could well be one of the suspects, because I know he would not be carrying his US passport with him. Many of these INS actions can escape accountability in front of a judge if the persecuted are merely suspected of being undocumented. Sooner or later stronger policing and the weakening of judicial review of such police actions will interfere with the aspiration towards the rule of law that is such a deep part of our inheritance and our lived reality. Sooner or later, this type of police action will touch us, the documented.

Defending the rule of law

Acting on immigration as if it were a national crisis is today both unsustainable and undesirable for states under the rule of law. Precarious and partial as the concept of the rule of law may be, and imperfect as its implementation is, it is nonetheless an impressive tool in the struggle for a better and more democratic society. Aspiration to it strongly conditions political and civic order in the highly developed countries. The rule of law in good part means the right of citizens to be free from abuses by the state and is not enhanced by the expanded use of policing as an instrument to maintain control over immigration.

The man motivated by the things of the mind does not stumble over barriers and differences; they stimulate him, instead. Only the man without a soul feels their weight and impediment.

Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg, 1772-1801,Germany)

Since it is likely that cross-border migration will continue as the world becomes increasingly globalized, it is urgent that we rethink and innovate on the policy front. As we develop the cross-border integration of markets for goods and services, for capital, for information, and for communications, I would argue that the flow of people will continue apace. This will be especially the case among the top level professionals whose mobility is an essential part of the integration of markets,and among low-wage workers for whom cross-border mobility is often the only option.

The powerful actors in the new economic order, such as global corporations and global markets often more powerful than many a government,are already hard at work setting up, albeit a mostly private, system of rule that protects the rights of these actors no matter what country they choose for their operations. And states, many enormously reluctant,have joined in the multiplying multilateral efforts that the new economic order demands. More and more of them have relinquished capacities and competences, and even bits and pieces of their sovereignty, in the name of a more effective multilateral economic order. They have done so not only de facto, in some low-level,close-to-the-ground operational sense, but also de jure through the formalization of these changes in national and international law. Yet in the realm of immigration policy we see the continuation, and even strengthening, of unilateral state action, the invocation of absolute and undiminished state sovereignty.

This raises several questions concerning the viability, effectiveness and desirability of such a framework for policy. Can such an immigration regime be viable when most other cross-border flows are increasingly centred in multilateralism and diminished state sovereignty? Even if it is viable is it the most effective way of proceeding? Similarly with the expansion of a policing approach. Is it viable or effective in the context of a strengthening civil society and human rights? When it comes to desirability, the issues around immigration are probably more ambiguous than in the case of trade and capital flows, and become entangled in a variety of well-founded rationales along with ill-guided political passions.

I believe that multilateralism is a better way to proceed in a broad range of matters, including immigration, because it is essential to create—and invent—policies that have receiving and sending countries working together. I also consider the expansion of policing undesirable and not the way for enlightened societies to proceed. Whatever the control achieved, the trade-offs are too costly both for the immigrants themselves but also especially for the receiving societies in terms of violations of civil and human rights and the threats to the fabric of civil society. ►

a global economy

Saskia Sassen*

A German border guard delivers refugees back to the Polish authorities.

© Clive Shirley/Signum/Editing, Paris

Regulation is necessary but achieving it does not necessitate militarizing borders and maximizing internal policing. Why? Because of a combination of three factors. First, far from being a mass invasion, immigration is patterned and bounded in time and space. Second, national states are acquiring greater competence in multilateral management because of economic globalization and hence may be more competent to develop multilateral co-operation mechanisms with sending countries. Third, again because of economic globalization national states have had to learn to accommodate a growing number of conditions and norms coming from international fora. This combination of factors signals the possibility of new approaches to regulating immigration.

The key to a more enlightened and less crisis-oriented approach is the fact that migrations are patterned. The evidence about international migrations in the United States, in Western Europe and in Japan shows that international migrations are patterned, bounded in scale and duration, and conditioned by other processes. They are not simply an indiscriminate flow from poverty to prosperity as is suggested by the imagery of "mass invasions". If poverty were enough to produce emigration, then the developed countries would indeed be threatened with massive invasions. But it is only a very tiny fraction of all the poor who emigrate and they do so from very specific areas and towards equally specific destinations.

Furthermore, most migrations end. They do not go on for centuries. Fifty years seems to be a fairly lengthy duration for most cross-border migrations in the United States and Western Europe—that is to say, specific migration processes of a given nationality group to a particular location. Indeed, twenty years is probably more common in Europe. One of the reasons for this is that such migrations tend to be embedded in the cycles and phases of the receiving areas. Dramatic examples of this include the migrations of hundreds of thousands of Italian and Spanish workers to northern Europe that were in full swing in the 1960s and basically ended in the 1970s. Today, when Italians and Spaniards are free to move within Europe, there is almost no new migration. That particular phase of labour migration, embedded as it was in the post-war reconstruction of Europe and then in the expansion of the 1960s, came to an end when these conditions no longer held, and Spain and Italy became prosperous.

Praise to thee,
Diversity of
creatures,
siren of the world!

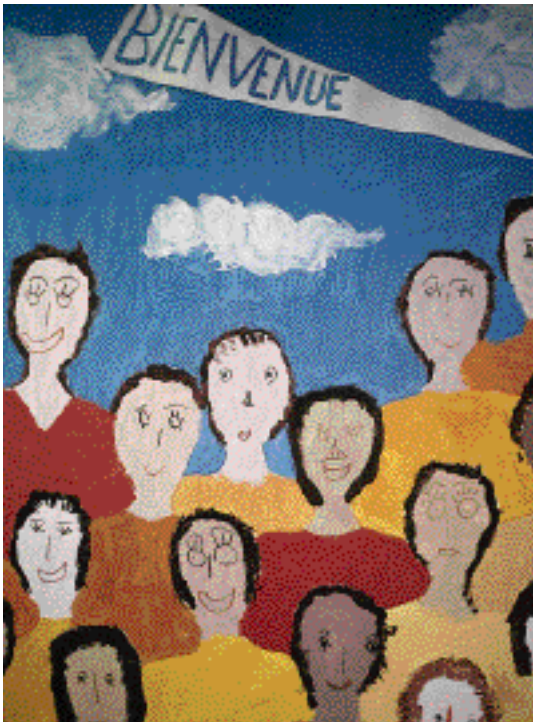
Gabriele d'Annunzio
(1863-1938, Italy)

If international migrations are conditioned, patterned and bounded processes, the policy response need not be confined to maximizing border control. We can move away from a mentality of national crisis to one of management. This may be a good time for such a change. There is some consensus about the existence of a widening gap between immigration policy intent and immigration reality in the major developed receiving countries. An important nine-country study published in 1994[1] found that the gap between the goals of national immigration policy (laws, regulations, executive actions, etc.) and the actual results is wide and growing wider in all major industrialized countries. It also found that immigration officials in all nine countries were less confident about the effectiveness of policy than their predecessors fifteen years before.

Major changes in policy approaches are a complex matter. Certainly the implementation of a new economic order required an enormous amount of problem solving and innovation. It is not evident to me that the last round of negotiations on the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the so-called Uruguay Round, was any less complex than immigration regulation. It took years of work, but it got done. I am convinced that we need a radical rethinking of key aspects of the regulation of immigration and an enormous amount of innovation if we are to have a more effective and enlightened set of immigration policies. Some of this work is under way in the European Union, which has seen considerable and at times radical innovations in the last ten years on the subject of immigration.

There is some consensus about the existence of a widening gap between immigration policy intent and immigration reality in the major developed receiving countries

Finally, there is now a so-called "concerted consensus" among a growing number of national states around the shared objective of furthering economic globalization and the major policy orientations that come with it—deregulation, privatization, anti-inflation policies, and foreign-exchange parity with the leading currencies. These are all fundamental conditions for the implementation of global capital markets. Along with the World Trade Organization and the environmental agenda, they have forced states to develop new competences to act multilaterally. They may suggest that national states can be led—or forced—to adopt a more international understanding of subjects such as immigration that used to be regarded in purely domestic terms. ■



A painting done by Belgian schoolchildren to encourage respect for differences.

© Béatrice Petit, Bruxelles

1. Wayne A Cornelius, Philip L. Martin, and James F. Hollifield (eds.), *Controlling Immigration. A Global Perspective*, Stanford University Press, 1994.

Small arms, many hands

An unusual mix of groups and governments braves a political minefield to curb the spread of light weapons

Lying in a hospital bed with chest and shoulder wounds, a sergeant in the Soviet Army began designing in 1941 what is now the world's most widely used weapon. Michael T. Kalashnikov had a simple objective: he wanted a sturdy gun that would combine the rapid rate of fire of a machine pistol with the greater accuracy of a rifle. And perhaps most important, he wanted a gun that could be mass produced to spare his compatriots the suffering he experienced in defending the homeland. Six years later, Kalashnikov's brainchild arrived in the form of the AK-47. With 16 parts that even a child can assemble, the gun has such notable look alikes as the Israeli Galil and the Western made M-16. The Kalashnikov family counts about 70 million guns, most of which are still in operation.

From Yemen to Sri Lanka, the world is awash in small arms and light weapons which are generally defined as those that can be carried by an individual or fired by a small crew. Small arms range from revolvers to sub-machine guns while light weapons include small mortars, hand-held or mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-aircraft guns and portable launchers of anti-tank and aircraft missiles.

© Alon Reininger/Contact Press Images, Paris

A Salvadorian child cleans a handgun.

500 million light weapons in circulation

Easy to conceal, these arms travel. Looting in Albania unleashed a wave of about three-quarters of a million weapons, the bulk of which has gone to Kosovo, according to Chris Smith, a light weapons specialist at King's College in London. Along the Namibia-Angola border, he has found an unusual group of gun traffickers, Xhosa women who buy AK-47s for about eight dollars each from impoverished Unita soldiers. They resell the merchandise in a chain of buyers reaching South Africa's Western Cape where the guns can be bought for as little as $20, down from the several hundreds they cost about four years ago. Meanwhile, Russia is "haemorrhaging" with weapons flowing throughout Europe. Further east, the Tamil Tigers have their own shipping fleet to assure supply from Burma and transit ports like Singapore, says Smith. And Kashmir and Karachi are reeling, he says, from the effects of the Afghan "pipeline" set up in the 1980s by the CIA to pump guns, missiles and ammunition to mujahideen battling the Soviet army.

An estimated 500 million light weapons are now in circulation world-wide. And another injection is likely, as states joining Nato (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) are obligated to buy advanced weapons systems to meet the organization's military standards. Many are expected to pay for these purchases by selling off their old systems which include light weapons.

Light weapons have been largely ignored during disarmament talks. While major political powers have hammered out ►

treaties concerning nuclear, chemical and conventional weapons,they have not even agreed on international standards for classifying or registering small arms and light weapons, let alone a UN convention concerning their transfer. And yet, they are the primary or sole tools of violence in virtually all the armed conflicts currently dealt with by the United Nations, according to Jayantha Dhanapala, UN Under Secretary General for Disarmament. Over 90 per cent of the victims of small arms are civilians, with women and children accounting for 80 per cent of casualties.

However, the political tides may be changing. An international campaign is now underway with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) of all stripes and colours—disarmament and gun control groups along with development and human rights associations in the North and South—building common ground with the active support of governments like Mali, Canada, Norway and Japan. Buoyed by success in banning landmines, they are setting their sights on small arms and light weapons, despite the major differences between them. The networks for producing and procuring light weapons are far more diverse and widespread than that for landmines. Small arms, unlike the mines, are also culturally embedded in many societies. Uprooting the myriad of gun cultures will take far more than a convention regulating their manufacture, use or export.

But before dismissing the campaign as just another liberal wave of good intentions, there seems to be growing interest on the part of some major political powers which just happen to be major arms suppliers. While developing countries have borne the brunt of the casualties, European and North American countries are now increasingly concerned as these weapons fuel the fires of ethnic and intra-state conflicts raging in their backyards, particularly in the Balkans.

"We are suddenly finding the doors widening from all kinds of governments," says Geraldine O'Callaghan of the British American Security Information Council (BASIC), an independent research organization. "The interest is also linked to the fact that these weapons don't have the same dollar value as the big ticket items like jets and tanks. Light weapons initiatives take attention away from the big weapons industry." O'Callaghan also points to the links between guns, drugs and organized crime, which rank high on domestic agendas. By focusing on efforts to curb this illicit trade, governments can score points with voters.

Estimates of the black market are sketchy at best. International trade in small arms reportedly runs at between three and five billion dollars a year. According to a UN study, the black market amounts to about 40 per cent of the legal trade, although some experts maintain that it could equal or surpass it.And even less is known about the "grey market" of covert sales between governments and to non-state actors.

The National Rifle Association's political clout

Despite the lack of data, the past year has seen a wave of initiatives to curb the illicit trade.The Organization of American States (OAS) brokered a convention outlining practical measures to notably strengthen import/export controls and increase information exchange between states. In short, states agreed that guns would be marked with the time and place of manufacture along with the name of the importer should they cross a border. Mexico turned the screws on the United States government, for whom anything resembling gun control is taboo given the political weight of the National Rifle Association (NRA), a UN accredited NGO which ferociously defends the individual's right to bear weapons. The Mexicans maintained that it was impossible to stop drugs streaming north so long as US guns inundated states south of the border.

Looking to the OAS convention as a model, the UN Economic and Social Council is now working to incorporate similar measures in the form of a "Firearms Protocol" which would fall within the Transnational Organized Crime Convention. The proposed protocol won the official support of the G-8 (Group of Eight Industrialized States) during a meeting in April 1998. And just a month later, foreign ministers of the European Union signed an ethical code of conduct essentially calling on states to refrain from transferring weapons to conflict zones or states likely to use them to commit serious human rights abuses.While a step forward, there are serious loopholes, notably in the lack of provisions for parliamentary or public scrutiny over arms exports.

With the possible exception of the EU code, these initiatives represent a law enforcement approach, the success of which depends on governments adopting and enforcing strict legal controls on weapons licenses. For some experts, it marks an important shift away from the traditional view in which guns are seen as a commodity to be traded like any other which exonerates the suppliers from responsibility over their end use.

"The focus on the illicit trade is basically an uncontroversial way of getting into the debate surrounding light weapons," says Elizabeth Clegg of Saferworld, an NGO. "While states like the United States have traditionally blocked any moves to restrict the production and sale of light weapons because there could be domestic implications,they could have little to say on attempts to curb illicit transactions.

"However, this approach does not address the problem of all the arms manufactured legally but which have gone through several chains of supply and are now in the grey and black market," says Clegg.

"It's dangerous," says Joost Hiltermann of Human Rights Watch,an NGO. "It lets governments off the hook by not holding them responsible for covert trade in the grey market. If governments have an interest in selling weapons, they will do so legally when they can and illegally if they

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'Focusing on the illicit arms trade does not address the problem of arms manufactured legally which go through several chains of supply before entering the black or grey market'

A poster campaign against handgun violence in Boston (USA).

must. You cannot get rid of the illegal trade without monitoring the legal trade. And to do that, you need to focus on government policy," says Hiltermann, who points to such classic tactics by which governments sell to second parties which then transfer the weapons to a third state, possibly in defiance of a UN embargo, or to a non-state actor.

Distinguishing between the legal and illegal trade has proven to be a political minefield. Alarms began ringing in August when Canada's Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy, a key player in the campaign after his involvement in brokering the ban on landmines, began asking foreign ministers to consider a global convention to prohibit the transfer of military-specification small arms and light weapons to non-state actors. According to a discussion paper by the Canadian foreign ministry, "these non-state actors are variously termed: terrorists, gangsters, bandits, warlords, hooligans and narcotraffickers." While recognizing that the proposed convention "would deny arms to non-state actors opposing repressive regimes," the ministry maintains "that non-violent means are the best way to effect political change."

Arms to defend human rights

"This is a very controversial issue, especially in the South," says Alejandro Bendaña of the Center for International Studies in Managua, Nicaragua. "This proposal would have banned giving weapons to the African National Congress during apartheid or to any other liberation movement."

Mr Axworthy seems to have taken a step back from his proposal. During a September meeting at the UN on the subject, he highlighted the links between the legal and illegal trade in supporting the idea of a UN conference on the subject, possibly in the year 2000.

Confusion of the issues is expected given the complicated nature of the subject and the diversity of the actors involved. In private conversations, law enforcement officials express concern, for example, in dealings with some disarmament and gun-control groups. By openly calling for changes to domestic gun laws, these groups may be offering the NRA the political ammunition needed to drag the US administration away from the negotiating table. As NRA spokesperson Tom Mason explains, "we are like an 800-pound gorilla sitting on the US administration."

Other experts are concerned that in trying to convince the public, particularly in the North, that disarmament is possible, there will be a hasty rush to set up gun buy-back projects and strategies concerning gun tagging, for example, without the technical expertise required. And given the politics involved, mistakes can prove costly—which raises the question of the campaign's finances.

"The funds should not be diverted from development budgets," says Bendaña, "nor should they be diluted by going towards television commercials in the North and professional lobbying. Countries just coming out of conflicts need demilitarizing—not just taking away mines but depolarizing divisions within society. This is very delicate. . . . We shouldn't build up expectations about the possible political success of this campaign. Conventions won't eliminate the demand for guns or the roots of violence because the economic violence will continue. . . . This is just one step in a long process." ■

Amy Otchet

Asia's booming **sex business**

The sex industry is assuming massive proportions in Southeast Asia. The findings of a study carried out by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in four countries of the region (Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia and Thailand) speak for themselves: prostitution is generating millions of dollars, currently amounting to between 2 per cent and 14 per cent of gross national product (GNP).

The ILO study, entitled The Sex Sector: The economic and social bases of prostitution in Southeast Asia, states that "although the exact number of working prostitutes in these countries is impossible to calculate due to the illegal or clandestine nature of the work, anywhere between 0.25 per cent and 1.5 per cent of the total female population are engaged in prostitution". Even more serious, the industry also includes thousands of children, who are forced to prostitute themselves and are victims of threats or violence, "which always leave them with a series of after-effects".

In 1993, an estimate for Thailand spoke of between 30,000 and 50,000 child prostitutes while, in the case of the Philippines, the ILO states that "a 1997 report put the number of child victims of prostitution at 75,000". It stresses that "International conventions all treat child prostitution as an unacceptable form of child labour: the goal is its total elimination"—and, at the same time, also the elimination of adult prostitution.

In practical terms, responsible travellers can contribute to a campaign known as "End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism" (ECPAT) which is being conducted by a number of non-governmental organizations, by reporting to the police on any suspicious activities at the places they visit and in their own countries when they return home. ■

For further information:
International Labour Organisation (ILO): http://www.ilo.org
ECPAT: http://www.rb.se/ecpat

Africa's video

Movie-makers in English-speaking Africa who cannot afford to produce classic celluloid films are winning popular acclaim with low-cost video productions

In the Third World and among urban ghetto dwellers in advanced countries, some technological inventions are used in ways that were never imagined or intended by their originators. They open up new areas of endeavour that can be independently pursued by the underprivileged. To take one example, the availability of low-cost samplers and four-track sound recording equipment has triggered a formidable explosion of ghetto-based rap music in the United States by making it possible for relatively unsophisticated young people with very little money to record high-quality music tracks in their own homes.

In the same vein, the emergence and proliferation of inexpensive VHS video tape recorders have led to the growth of video-based movie production in several African countries, especially Nigeria and Ghana. To understand the importance of this phenomenon, it must be borne in mind that film production in most African countries originated primarily as a result of external assistance, rather than truly indigenous efforts. It was essentially because of the availability of technical and financial assistance from the French Co-operation Ministry that countries of francophone Africa such as Senegal and Burkina Faso made considerable progress in film production.

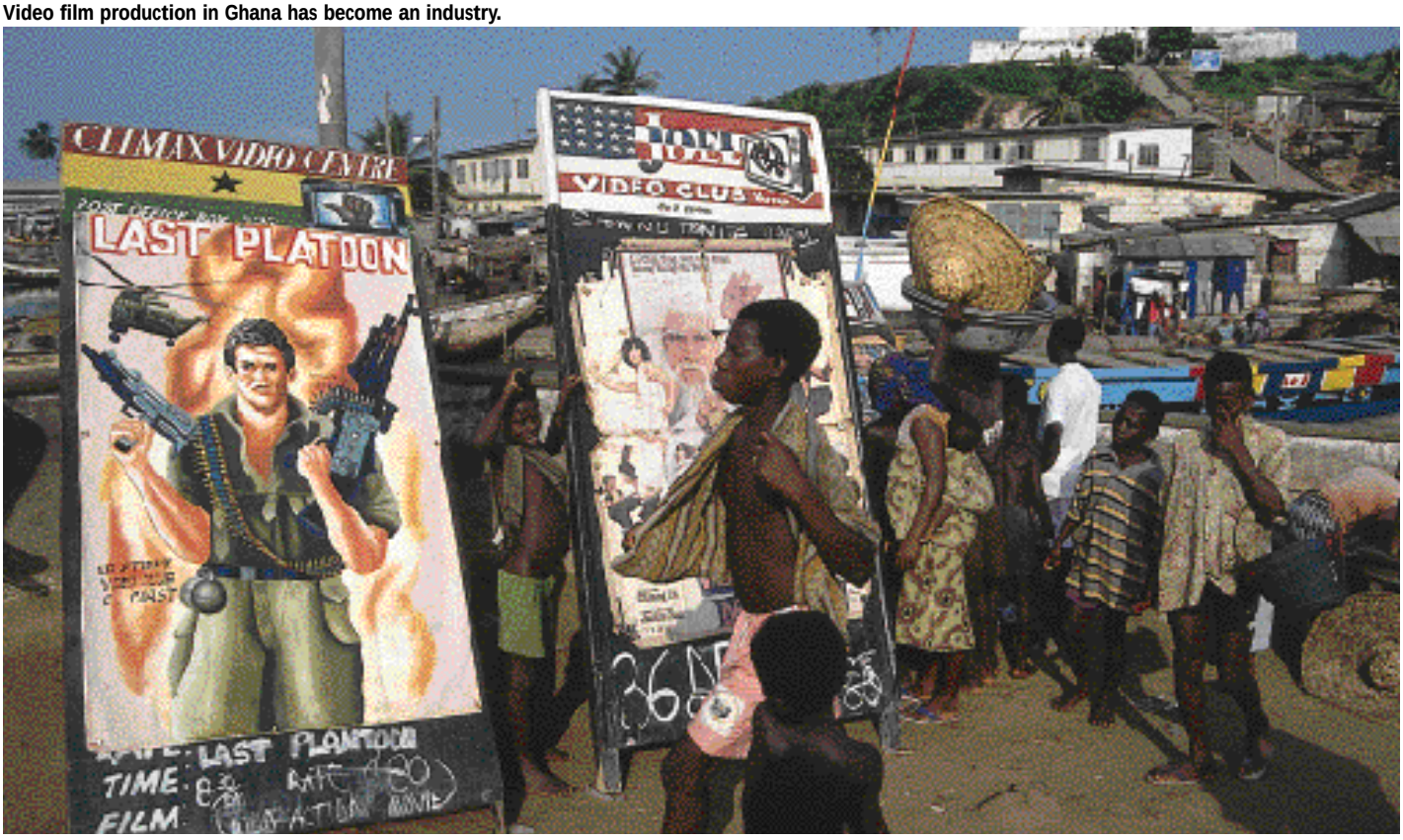
Prohibitive production costs

In the English-speaking countries, on the other hand, where assistance of this kind was not readily available, film production generally lagged behind in the absence of meaningful cultural policies designed to support indigenous film-makers. Non-subsidized film production was possible for a time in the 1970s and 1980s because the economy was buoyant enough to recoup the high costs of using rented equipment from overseas and paying for processing and printing in European laboratories.

In the late 1980s, the local economy virtually collapsed, robbing the middle classes and the population at large of the means to pay consistently for leisure entertainment. The cost of film production became prohibitive. Even a low-budget film costing only $50,000 could not pay for itself on the local market. As a result no one ventured into film production. Hence the drought of Nigerian-made films, a seemingly incomprehensible paradox in view of the growing number of films made in relatively small and economically less well endowed countries of francophone Africa.

Another major obstacle to film production in most African countries has been that there are no true television

Video film production in Ghana has become an industry.



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alternative

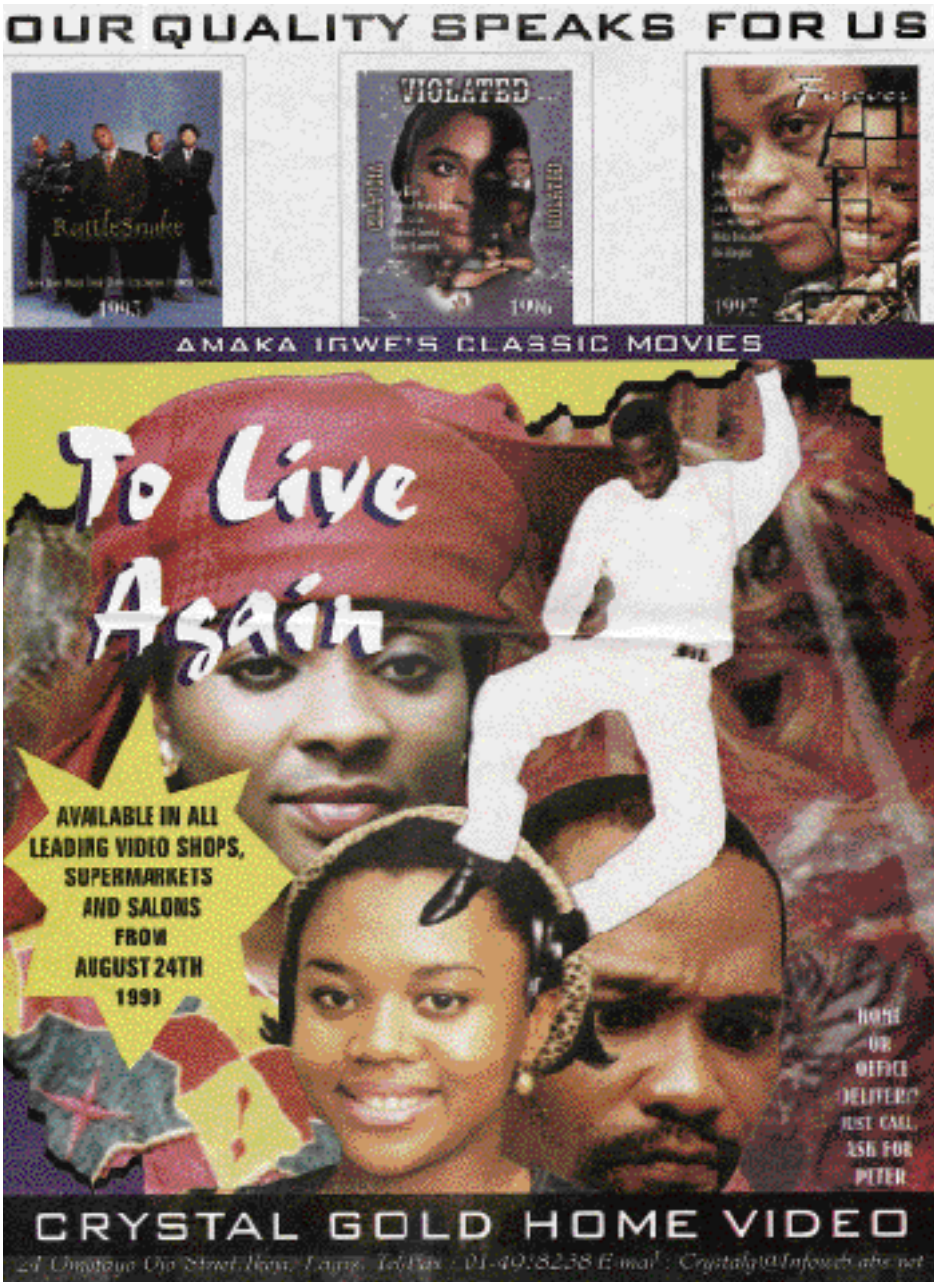
Ola Balogun*

stations. In most cases, African television stations are shells which serve as relay posts for films produced elsewhere. They have little or no production capability, and have no funds with which to purchase or co-produce feature films or television series.

Story-telling with panache

However, the proliferation of VHS video tape recorders in private homes in countries like Nigeria and Ghana has created a radically new situation which has led to the emergence of a legion of independent indigenous movie directors and television producers. They have emerged because of their ability to solve two key problems: first, pegging movie production costs at a level that can be easily recovered on the local market, and second, creating distribution mechanisms that bypass the lack of indigenous television stations and the limitations of a feeble network of cinema houses.

Most of these productions are low-budget films which are shot principally in U-matic or even VHS format, although a few are shot on Betacam or on the new generation of consumer-level digital cameras. The technical quality is often below par, because most of the production staff, especially the directors of photography, generally lack formal training. However, what these productions lack in technical quality and finesse they make up for in astonishingly colourful story-telling and popular appeal. As a result of successful mass marketing techniques reminiscent of the early days of Hollywood, Nigeria has been inundated with these productions. According to the Nigerian Film Censorship Board, no fewer than 858 full-length video films were released between December 1994 and May 1998.



D.R.

Posters like this pepper the streets of Lagos.

Because this production is entirely market-driven, the films are closer to the tastes of African audiences than the vast majority of foreign-assisted films made in francophone African countries. The reasons for this are clear: Who pays the piper calls ▶

Film production in Nigeria

	December 1994	1995	1996	1997	January-May 1998	Total
No. of video films	3	201	258	256	140	858
In English	1	15	62	114	54	245
In Yoruba	2	161	166	89	59	475
In Ibo	0	15	22	19	6	62
Hausa, Itsekiri, Pidgin*	0	2	1	4	3	10
Celluloid films	0	0	1	0	0	1

* Statistics for other languages not included

Source: Nigerian Film Censorship Board

* Nigerian film-maker

There can be no doubt that video movie production in countries like Nigeria and Ghana represents an African response to the existence of today's information jungle

the tune.

The content and style of foreign-assisted films are often dictated by Western movie critics or civil servants in the French Co-operation Ministry. The success of the films depends on the reception they receive in festivals and art house circuits in Europe, rather than on their popularity with African audiences. The contents and style of video movies, on the other hand, are necessarily dependent on mass audience tastes in Africa and are totally unsuitable for film festivals and art house audiences. Hopefully, however, there will be a meeting point some day between the need for quality and depth and the quest for mass market appeal.

With the growing development of digital television technology and the concomitant fall in costs, it will soon be possible for African video products to be remastered on 16 mm or 35 mm without great loss of quality and so become available for cinema distribution. Meanwhile, the availability of video projectors is beginning to make possible a new type of distribution in relatively small viewing centres. These movies are also remarkably popular with Nigerians and Ghanaians in Europe and the United States, suggesting that in the not-too-distant future a market might emerge for distribution by cable or satellite to these expatriate communities.

There can be no doubt that video movie production in countries like Nigeria and Ghana represents an African response to today's information jungle. It is the response of people who have chosen to carve out their own path, rather than wait for the ambiguous benefits of travelling along glistening information highways in a manner scripted by the powerful forces that currently dominate the world political and economic scene. ■

An **inventive** response

Attempts to describe today's global communications landscape often include glib references to information highways along which all humanity is supposed to travel, following in the footprints of the technologically advanced nations. Time and again we are told that the future lies in advanced technology per se, and not in the content of the products of communication.

According to this viewpoint, everyone should hook up to the Internet without delay and be inundated with messages emanating from web sites in the world's major nations. It is also thought unseemly for a country to try to protect its airspace from being bombarded by satellite television broadcasts from powerful transnational commercial conglomerates and state-funded television concerns in parts of the world that share the same basic cultural, political and economic outlook.

Some African governments have been unwise enough to sign agreements allowing foreign state-funded radios to broadcast on FM in their countries, thus unwittingly creating unfair competition for their own local radio stations. Similarly, most Third World television stations believe they are making good use of the information highway by accepting virtually free satellite news coverage transmitted worldwide by powerful overseas broadcasters. Since they do not own satellites themselves and often lack the financial means to send television crews to cover events even in neighbouring countries, the executives of these television stations are often only too willing to overlook the political and cultural implications of continuously relying on overseas sources. It may well be that by agreeing to travel along the information highway in a manner scripted in advance by others, Third World decision-makers are exposing the citizens of their countries to a new and insidious form of colonization. From this perspective, gifts of free television programmes have a heavy cost.

The key to Third World participation in the so-called information highway lies in making imaginative use of new forms of technology that fall within their reach for the express goal of serving their interests and needs. Against this background, the rapid growth of indigenous movie production on video tape over the past few years in a number of African countries may be a step in the right direction. **O. B.** ■

Romance **African** style

'And then they got married and lived happily ever after and were blessed with lots of children. . . .' What could be more universal than the denouement of romantic novels, tales of love and luxury, passionate affairs between tough guys and tender women leading up to the inevitable happy ending.

One need only browse through the book section of any supermarket in the Western world to get an idea of the fictional settings favoured by successful exponents of this kind of literature such as Barbara Cartland and the Spanish writer Corín Tellado: tropical paradises, Alpine ski resorts, Loire valley châteaux, mansions in European principalities and beaches in California.

But in Adores, a series of novels with an African background which has recently been launched by the Côte d'Ivoire publishing house Nouvelles Editions Ivoiriennes (NEI), the characters eat manioc or fried banana instead of caviar, drink ginger juice instead of champagne, and instead of waltzing throw themselves into the mapouka, a dance that is all the rage in Abidjan.

Series editor Méliane Boguifo, who is also an official with the Côte d'Ivoire ministry of education, explains that "the idea came from the observation that the women of our country and African women in general adore love stories from the West and are as partial to them in book form as in the cinema. We are now giving them an opportunity to recognize themselves in an African setting."

Six books have been published so far, including such evocative titles as Coeurs piégés ("Trapped Hearts"), Cache-cache d'amour ("Hide-and-Seek Love") and Un bonheur inattendu ("Unexpected Happiness"). As a result of several book-signing sessions and a promotional campaign on television and radio and in the press, 36,000 copies were sold in two months in Côte d'Ivoire and neighbouring countries like Senegal and Benin. Published in French, the novels in the Adores series cost 1,500 CFA francs ($2.5) at newsstands and in bookshops. Their authors are well-known writers who prefer to use pseudonyms, or law and literature students such as Guet Lydie and Koné Fibla. If the example catches on in Asia, Latin America and elsewhere, Barbara Cartland will have to look to her laurels. ■

Crossed wires in global telecoms

James Deane*

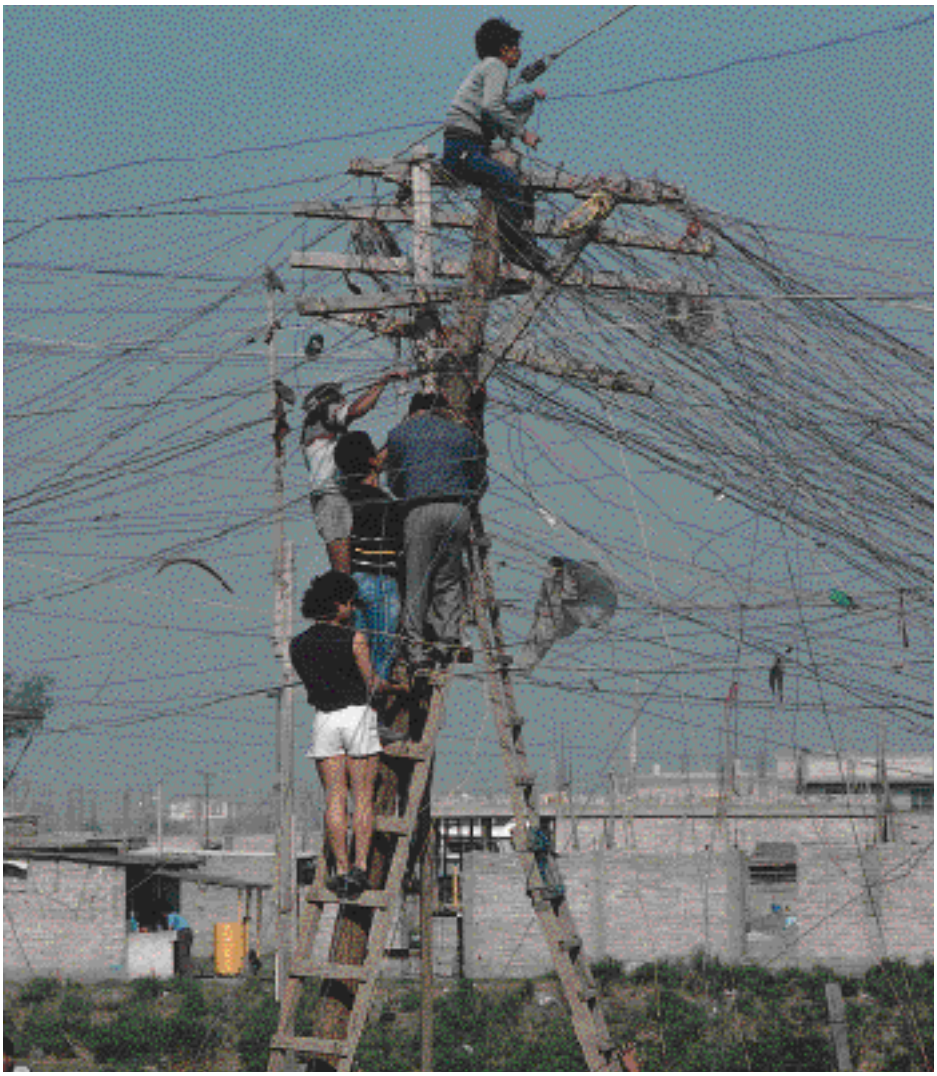
Deregulation of the telecommunications market may inflict crippling costs on some of the world's poorest countries

If you have a friend in Sydney, Johannesburg or Beijing and you haven't spoken to them for a while, you will soon have to think of a better excuse than "it costs too much". Prices of international telephone calls are plummeting. Before long, making a call to the other side of the planet will cost as much as it currently costs to call your neighbour.

We are moving towards a distanceless, borderless world where you will be able to call anyone, almost anywhere for a few cents or pennies. "The death of distance as a determinant of the cost of communicating will probably be the single most important force shaping society in the first half of the next century," argues *The Economist* magazine.

There is a problem, though. Amidst the excitement and glamour generated by the prospects of cheap calls, mobile phones and the Internet, a quiet, poorly understood but increasingly desperate struggle is being waged by some countries to adapt to the new realities. The process of change threatens to cripple the economies of these countries, mainly the poorest on the planet. Their problem is made worse by the fact that this issue is mired in the tedious technicalities of how telephone calls are charged and accounted for.

A repair crew at work in Mexico City.



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When poverty pays dividends

One reason why international calls have been so expensive is that many countries have traditionally charged high prices for completing the calls. Make a call from Washington to Jamaica, for example, and the American telephone company has to pay the telephone company in Jamaica to connect the call,and that cost is passed on to the person making the call.The system which defines how much each company pays each other company is known as the international accounting rate system. It is the result of bilateral agreements which determine the price of the connexion and the amount (usually 50 per cent of this price) that a telephone company in country X pays to its opposite number in countryY for connecting the call (the settlement rate).

In an ideal world, every country would originate as many telephone calls as it receives. However, we live in an unequal world and because most of their citizens are poorer and have less developed telephone systems, nearly all developing countries receive more calls than they originate. Perhaps uniquely, in this instance poverty pays. Most developing countries receive much more money from international telephone traffic than they pay out.

In 1996, developing countries as a whole ►

*The Panos Institute, London

netted around $10 billion in foreign exchange through this system. For some least developed countries, revenue from international calls is their biggest "export" industry and their largest source of foreign exchange. "To put that into perspective," says Pekka Tarjanne, Director-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations body responsible for telecommunications, "if you add together all the lending programmes in telecommunications of all the development banks around the world, the total sum they invested during the first half of the 1990s would still amount to less than is generated in just one year [by the developing countries]

The least developed countries and other low-income small economies with, say, less than one million inhabitants, are likely to be hardest hit

under the accounting rate system."

Many developing countries have used the system to charge high prices for completing calls, arguing that they need the foreign exchange to develop their own domestic telephone systems. But now a combination of technology, power politics and the harsh competitive disciplines ushered in by the global liberalized telecommunications market place is likely to lead to a sudden and potentially catastrophic fall in these revenues, with unknown consequences for some developing economies and possibly for some richer countries as well.

"If we don't succeed in reaching an agreement [on international accounting rates], in the next few years we will see chaos and anarchy in telecommunications and many people in the developing countries will suffer tremendously," argues Pekka Tarjanne. "And so will customers in the developed world."

But the poorest countries are likely to suffer most. "The least developed countries and other low-income small economies with, say, less than one million inhabitants, are likely to be hardest hit," by reform of the system according to the International Telecommunication Union. Jamaica, for example earns around $150 million a year from international telephone calls. "Reduction in . . . rates will reduce this inflow, affecting the country's foreign exchange and balance of trade," says Cezley Sampson of the Mona Institute of Business Studies at the University of the West Indies. It will also lead to a worse telephone service in the country, according to Jamaican Ambassador Anthony Hill. "Too rapid a reduction in settlement rates will lead to substantial increases in local telephone charges leading to significant service disconnections," he says.

Why is the system falling apart? A major reason is technology. The technical costs of international telecommunications are plummeting. A single pair of optical fibres, each the thickness of a human hair, can now carry all of North America's long distance communications traffic. The capacity of networks built with these fibres is ten times that of networks built just a few years ago. That means much lower operating costs for companies—and thus the opportunity to charge much lower prices.

Technological costs have fallen so much, according to the ITU, that "the cost of an international link is effectively close to zero, [and] it could almost be dismissed as having no bearing on the cost of an international call." But while the cost of calls placed through satellites or undersea cables has been falling by as much as 30 per cent per year since the early 1990s, according to the ITU, international accounting rates have been falling by only 9 per cent.

Technology is not the only factor, however. Most people complain that international telephone calls still cost too much—but international conglomerates and multinationals don't just complain, they demand. Telecommunications is at the heart of the modern global economy with trillions

© Ron Giling/Lineair, Arnhem

Zambian telephone repairmen: business seems to be booming.

of dollars being traded over telephone wires each year, and the pressures to force prices down are immense. This is a key reason behind the increasing liberalization of telecommunications—and with it intense competition between telephone companies.

Opening markets to competition

In February this year, 72 countries, which between them control 93 per cent of global telecommunications traffic, began to implement a World Trade Organization agreement to open up their telecommunications markets to foreign competition. This has led to an orgy of mergers between giant telecommunications companies. With countries now opening their markets to competition and so much of the world's telecommunications traffic being dominated by giant international conglomerates, it is becoming almost

Website of the month

http://www.cosmo.com.br/procedor/unesco

A site from Brazil featuring the Kamayurá and Urubu-Kaapor tribes has been awarded the first UNESCO Web prize. Chosen by an international jury for "strengthening multicultural content on the Internet", it provides a remarkable and innovative glimpse of the tribes' history, folklore, arts and music through stories, sounds and beautifully-designed imagery, accompanied by texts in English, Spanish, Portuguese and Esperanto.

The $5,000 annual prize is awarded to a site "in recognition of outstanding achievements by artists, designers and programmers in creating websites in UNESCO's fields of competence" which contribute to the ideals of UNESCO, particularly a culture of peace.

The jury also awarded three honourable mentions: to World Video 40° from Germany (http://www.khm.de/projects/worldvideo), "an outstanding example of the emergence of a web-specific art form"; to Nirvanet from Belgium (http://www.nirvanet.com), for "its possibilities in networking and creating virtual communities"; and to Sur les routes du monde from Burkina Faso (http://www.delgi.gov.bf/routesdumonde/) for its presentation and content attuned to developing countries, in this case the problems facing women and children in the region.

More information on the award and this year's winners is available at:
http://www.unesco.org/webworld/webprize ■

impossible for developing countries to continue to charge the prices they want.

One country, however, has decided that it can wait no longer for reform. The United States is the big loser under the old system—its companies run a deficit of almost $6 billion a year in accounting rate payments. The US has thus decided to introduce its own pricing system which will only allow US companies to pay companies in other countries very reduced prices to complete international calls. "[The existing system] is an ancient, outmoded, pro-monopoly system of settlement payments between countries that has propped up overly high charges to consumers for international calls and led to a huge outflow of money from the US to foreign companies," said Reed Hundt, the then chairman of the US government's Federal Communications Commission (FCC) when he announced the move in 1996. Although the FCC system, which comes into force next year, allows the poorest countries up to five years before they have to pay the new prices, the US move has infuriated many countries.

"The settlement rate in Colombia is around 50 cents per minute—more than twice that of rates proposed by the FCC," argues David Townsend, a consultant who has made a special study for the ITU on the impact of accounting rate reductions on Colombia. "Accounting rates set at the FCC benchmarks would have very severe negative impact on the Colombian telecommunications sector—in fact Colombian operators would lose money on every call," he says. The FCC disagrees with his analysis.

Some have even accused the US of a new form of colonialism in its accounting rate policy. "Historically, the US has refused to be regulated by the ITU and when not able to get its own way within the ITU has resorted to internationalizing its own domestic law," says Professor Jill Hills of the International Institute of Telecoms Regulators in London. "The FCC's threat to withdraw from the ITU's system of accounting rates follows this tradition," she argues.

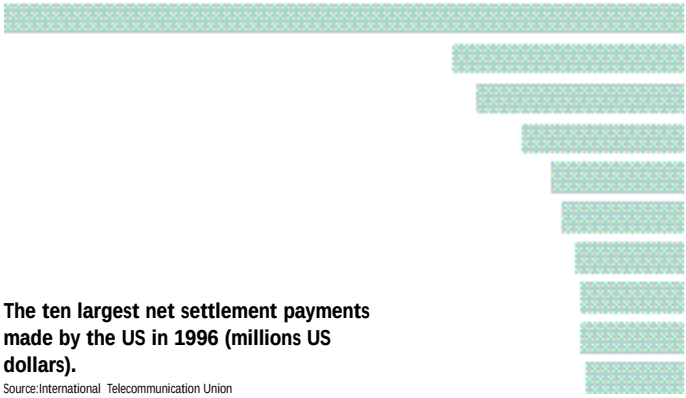
However, it is widely accepted that the current system needs radical reform. In 1992, for example, the ITU adopted a resolution calling for settlement payments to reflect the real costs of completing calls.

The technological and economic changes sweeping the telecommunications industry offer huge new opportunities for many developing countries to "leapfrog" the older industrial powers. Instead of having to invest billions in digging trenches to bury cables, as the industrial powers have done, liberalization can potentially help mobilize massive foreign investment to create nation-wide, state of the art, digital networks based on mobile telecommunications and optic fibres.

The bottom line, though, is that at a critical moment in their economic development, some of the world's poorest countries find themselves with a huge economic handicap in the telecommunications race. If nothing is done to help them, this handicap could last for a generation. ■

On the Web
http://www.itu.int/intset
http://www.oneworld.org/panos/briefing/telrates.htm

US settlement payments



Mexico	878.2
India	298.8
China	267.1
Hong Kong	208
Japan	171.4
Philippines	157.8
Colombia	139.5
Brazil	133.7
Argentina	132.7
Pakistan	127.1

The ten largest net settlement payments made by the US in 1996 (millions US dollars).
Source: International Telecommunication Union

The **ups** and **downs** of the written press

Newspaper circulation is on the decline in many rich nations but is increasing in developing countries.

Between 1993 and 1997, sales of dailies fell by an average of 3.7% in the countries of the European Union, according to the World Newspaper Association (WNA). A report presented at the association's 51st congress in Kobe (Japan) last June said daily circulation in the United States dropped by 5.2%. In Russia, which had the highest newspaper circulation in the world—96 million copies a day at the end of the communist era—sales of dailies have fallen by 54.4% since 1993.

The decline in these countries contrasts with the vitality of daily newspapers in some Southern countries where, despite censorship, economic crisis and problems of getting raw materials, sales have risen over the same five-year period. Sales in India have gone up by 47.2% and in Brazil by 9%.

Other sources confirm the trend. The latest UNESCO figures show that the penetration of the daily press has increased in almost every African country in this period. In Algeria, the number of daily papers available per 1,000 inhabitants rose from 115 to 122 copies, in Nigeria from 1,700 to 1,950, in Côte d'Ivoire from 90 to 128 and in Ghana from 200 to 310.

Various surveys, including one by the American firm Market Facts, attribute the drop in sales to the growth of the Internet, but its direct impact has not yet been demonstrated. The WNA says, for example, that in the United Kingdom, the Internet is more an extra than a replacement for the written press. The same goes for the United States, where regular readers of on-line news also consult other sources, such as newspapers, radio and television, to supplement their information.

The main concern of editors right now is how to attract young readers, who are more drawn to a mouse and a screen than to the printed word. ■

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Mira Nair:

One of India's most celebrated and controversial film-makers is driven by an obsession with creative freedom

You were born in India, studied in the United States and now live in South Africa. Where is home?

I left India when I was eighteen years old and then divided my time between the United States and India for about ten years before meeting my husband in Kampala, Uganda, during the shooting of *Mississippi Masala*. Now we have been living in South Africa for the last two years. I travel a lot due to professional reasons but I make my home where the family is, where my husband and child are.

Why did you decide to go into cinema? Your films seem fired by a strong sense of social justice.

I was not one of those people who knew they would be making films from the age of eight. I fell into cinema, and then became possessed by it. I started as an actor, committed to fairly radical experimental theatre, street protest theatre and related things. I was also a good student, and suffered under the illusion I might have become an academic. I received a full scholarship to study at Harvard University when I was eighteen and went to pursue my interest in theatre. But once there, I felt the theatre at the university was too conventional, too staid,compared to what I had done in India. I also grew impatient with the lack of control one has an actor. Actors are always at the mercy of directors and their vision of the world. I wanted to be the one in control—telling the story, controling the light, the gesture and the frame. Creative freedom is imperative for me.

I can only make films about subjects that get under my skin and make my heart beat faster

Making independent films is an obsessive task—having an idea, writing the script, finding finance, casting, shooting and editing. Then comes the big struggle to make sure the film is distributed throughout the world. All of this could easily take one or two years. In order to live with a project every day for two years I have to be obsessed by it.I can only make films about subjects that get under my skin and make my heart beat faster. I am not in the business of producing films which offer a pleasant way of filling a Sunday afternoon. That is for others to do, and I don't dismiss it. But I am attracted to ideas that will provoke people and make them look at the world a little differently—stories that come from my part of the world.

I do have a private agenda, I suppose, to resist the cultural imperialism of Hollywood by putting people like ourselves on screen. It is an enormous validation to see people on screen who look like us in India or elsewhere in the South. We must tell our own stories, because nobody else is going to do it for us. I must say I enjoy the responsibility of exploring and portraying these stories through film-making. After all, film, unlike academia, reaches millions. This is another dimension of my work which I really enjoy—the ability to reach so many people. Yet at the same time, I don't forget or underestimate the individual viewer in the audience.

Why focus on communities and individuals living in exile and what have you learned about cultural identity and racism? Why do Indian communities in exile, for example, feel the need to keep to the fringes of society?

I seem to be getting some sort of reputation for making films about exile. I didn't choose this, it chose me. Distance from a community is something which used to confuse me but now I use it as a tool for my films.

I suppose I understand that state of being, and know what it feels like to look outside a motel window in Mississippi and see my garden in Kampala. You can find yourself on the other side of the world and yet still find a reminder or link to home. Yet I don't suffer from nostalgia or homesickness. I think of myself as someone with a huge appetite for the world and as a great lover of people. I find this great commonality between people.Yet ignorance and fear—the two hallmarks of racism—blind us to it.

What was especially moving about being in Mississippi to shoot my film was that I found black families—with their closeness and church and singing and barbecues—were actually so much like the Indian families that seemed so removed from that community even though they lived just across the highway. The Indian community was doing the same things, believing in similar values to those of the black community.Yet the Indians imagined the blacks to be not quite as human or the same as them.

Indian communities living abroad form their own circle, perhaps to maintain a certain cultural and sometimes religious purity. In the process, they become more frozen in their "Indianness" than those living in India. By doing so, they also systematically exclude themselves from integration with the local communities. When I went to Kampala to make *Mississippi Masala*, some Indians were surprised to see that I am not as "Indian"as they expected.

Your films explore paradoxes by showing how, for example, the slave becomes the master. Where does this insight come from? Do you draw on your observation skills as a documentary film-maker or on your intuition?

I have an eye and ear for paradox. That is life. The grey area where no one person is less or more virtuous than the other. For me the truth is far more interesting, far more strange,than fiction.

This is where cultural specificity comes in. You do extensive research about a theme, feel it and then create a story that

an eye for paradox

could become universal. Tyranny is the absence of complexity, as Gide said. And complexity is interesting to explore in film instead of constantly looking for the lowest common denominator. I believe in intuition. I follow my intuition absolutely in finding and developing stories to tell. For me, there are subjects which just seem obvious to explore. For example, I once made a documentary called *Children of Desired Sex*, an Indian euphemism for people wanting only male children, the desired sex. The documentary set out to explore how amniocentesis,the procedure invented to test the genetic balance of a child, was being abused in a horrific manner in India as a test for women to ascertain the sex of their unborn child. If the foetus was female,they would abort.

The censorship problems aside, I do believe that women film-makers have access to some people and subjects which men do not

But finding a subject is not enough. The trick is to create a work situation in which intuition is allowed to reign.

Many people who spend years abroad benefit from a certain distance when returning to their countries of origin. They are able to critically observe their native societies, without necessarily passing judgment. Perhaps this distance helps to explain the clarity in films like Salaam Bombay! Yet it may also bring you opposition. How do you respond to accusations that you are trying to sell India's poverty?

I choose subjects which touch me. I am not the first one to be accused of selling India's poverty. The government accused even the renowned film-maker Satyajit Ray of the same thing. After seeing *Salaam Bombay!* I don't think anybody can say that it is a film that gratuitously shows the depression and misery in India. The movie celebrates the survival of the human being in the face of all the odds. In day to day life, an individual does not notice such things. Also, many of us in our lives—instead of coping with the inequities of existence here—become blind and numb. Yet looking away from reality does not make it disappear.

The same thing happened with *Kama Sutra*. I didn't hide sexuality behind veils or dances. Indian commercial films are always filled with sexual innuendoes and obscene songs about "what is under the blouse". In fact, sexuality in Indian cinema is cloaked in rape and violence. In my film, I wasn't trying to shock but tell the story straight, without hiding behind illusions or pretence. The irony is that we come from a culture which had regarded love and sexuality as a link to the divine. It was an art to be learned and yet to be treated as a matter of fact.

Do you think Kama Sutra generated even more controversy because it was made by a woman? What possibilities or pitfalls face a female film-maker?

Films portraying sexual subjects are bound to attract problems with the censors. But you cannot imagine the troubles that lie in wait if a woman director attempts to focus on them. Before making the film, everyone told me that I would have problems but I never imagined that I would be dragged through the courts for almost two years! After going through all kinds of legal battles with the Indian censorship board and government, I knew that the attacks were particularly vehement because I am a woman.

The censorship problems aside, I do believe that women film-makers have access to some people and subjects which men do not. For example while making my film *India Cabaret* which dealt with the lives of female stripteasers in Bombay, I could enter their lives in a rather comprehensive way. I even managed to visit the houses of the men who frequented these cabaret joints and talk to their wives.

Kama Sutra felt like an experiment. Was it an attempt to shift from being a documentary film-maker to being an art film-maker?

While I was working in documentary I ▶

Mississippi Masala: an Indian family migrates to the United States.

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Salaam Bombay!: Mira Nair's first feature film.

The **'tough sister'**

Mira Nair took the film world by storm with her first feature, *Salaam Bombay!*, in 1988. Coming from a country which produces more feature films than any other, she proved that even art movies can be commercially successful. Her film career, which started in 1979, has brought her global accolades and at the same time fierce criticism at home.

The youngest of the three children of a civil servant, Nair was born in 1957 in the city of Bhubaneshwar in eastern India. Although watching movies at the local cinema was one of her early interests she was particularly captivated by theatre, which she studied (along with sociology) at the University of Delhi. In Delhi she became involved in political street theatre and performed for three years in an amateur drama company before setting out for the United States on a fellowship in 1976 to study drama.

Disillusioned with the conservative theatre programme at Harvard University, she was soon drawn to documentary film-making. Her decision gave her the opportunity to work with three leading film-makers, Alfred Guzzeti, Richard Leacock and D.A. Pennebaker. Seven years after graduating she had made four documentaries exploring "the culture and traditions of India and their impact on the lives of ordinary people."

Greatest recognition came with *Salaam Bombay!* a film which, she says, "portrayed the reality of children who are denied a childhood, children who survive on the streets with resilience, humour, flamboyance and dignity." Before shooting, Nair and her scriptwriter, Sooni Taraporevala, a college friend and a native of Bombay, conducted a three-month workshop with 30 street children, all of whom then performed in the feature film. *Salaam Bombay!* won 23 international awards including the Caméra d'Or and the Prix du Public at the 1989 Cannes Film Festival. In the same year it received an Academy award nomination as Best Foreign Language Film. Nair is proud of it. "Especially for our children and for India, since it's the first nomination we've had since 1957, the year I was born."

The "Kuskoo Didi" (tough sister), as the street children called her, made sure they get long-term benefit from *Salaam Bombay!* She put the bulk of their salaries in a bank account, and with some of the film's profits she and her colleagues established "Salaam Balak Trust", a non-profit organization that provides homeless children with educational, medical and vocational services.

After making *Kama Sutra: A Tale of Love* (1997), she battled with the Indian censors for eighteen months before it could be released and shown in cinema halls across the country. "The censor board wanted to cut out everything vaguely sexual, cut it beyond recognition.I had to go all the way to the Supreme Court of India to release my film."

Nair now lives in Cape Town (South Africa) with her husband Mahmood Mamdani, a political scientist, and their young son Zohran. Her interest in the themes of identity, culture and exile continues. Faithful to her own personal tradition she is currently preparing for yet another trans-continental move. ■

often became impatient when I had to wait for something to happen and then not having it happen like I hoped it would. I wanted to have a lot more control over gesture and drama. So I shifted to feature films. The challenge in a feature film is to capture the sense of the instantaneous moment of a documentary. Documentaries have a certain edge as events seem to unroll before the camera. This is difficult to convey in the controlled environment of a feature film.

My greatest challenge in *Kama Sutra* was to be faithful to myself and to make a film about strong women who are not afraid to celebrate their sexuality and have found a way to love fully. Another challenge was to create a world that felt real. Not to create one mired in exotica and anthropology, but one that felt so local that it became universal. I wanted to address the lack of understanding or thought about what is genuinely Eros and how we should be prepared to handle Love. I think I succeeded in showing how Eros permeates everyday life.

The film is not targeted at any particular audience. It's for the world. Perhaps this ambitious goal proved to be a problem for me, but it was a good lesson. Although I achieved what I wanted to in the visual and sensual qualities of *Kama Sutra*, I felt that the story suffered.

Film-making is a journey, like any other work of art. You make films and hope that the end product is what you wanted. Sometimes you achieve that and sometimes you end up with something different.

How did Indian women viewers respond to Kama Sutra?

When the movie was released in India last year I made contractual obligations with the distributors that there should be matinee screenings thrice a week for women only. In Indian cinemas, 90 per cent of the audience are men. I did not want my female audience to be harassed or intimidated by men's presence, so I insisted on these all-women screenings. It made women feel safer and made it easier to see my message.

It is a myth that Indian women do not want to know about intimate love. In fact, the film was a great hit and women frequented the theatres all over the country. It was among the top three commercially successful movies in India last year.

How do you find finance in a developing country where there is hardly any support for art movies?

I am lucky that my films actually make money for those who invest in them. For me the most important thing is to have complete independence while making a movie. Yet it is very difficult to find finance for my kind of work in India. That's why I rely on a mix of international distributors, mostly from Japan, Europe and some in India. I don't take the whole sum from one person or company because that would involve a lot of constraints and dependence. I would have to make a movie according to the needs and interests of the financier instead of making a film that is mine. I think you have much more freedom with $6 million raised independently than $50 million from a single studio.

Do you consider film-making to be a cultural industry or an art form justifying and requiring state support?

As an art form, films do need support. For example, it would not have been possible for me to make my first feature film without support from India's National Film Development Corporation. We get to see lots of good movies from Australia where the state supports the industry. Ideally speaking, a movie should be able to support itself, but I still believe in some form of assistance or subsidies, especially for first films.

India produces the largest number of commercial films in the world, with its own version of Hollywood referred to as Bollywood (Bombay). Yet the country fails to produce good art film directors. Why?

I wouldn't say that Indian directors lack talent. It is simply that they lack opportunities. Basically you have to struggle for yourself to find finance for your movies in India. Unless the financier is sure about making profits, he will not support the project. Second, there is a big problem in distributing films. I know many cases where movies are made but never seen because there aren't any distributors for art films. It's not that Indian audiences aren't interested in seeing independent films. The problem lies in the lack of theatres committed to showing them.

What next?

I am now working on a movie called *Bombay 2000*, which I suppose I could call my first Bollywood film, but on my own terms. It's about a city going global, about the relationship between a mother and daughter and an American hustler who enters their lives. The mother was a legendary film actress in the old Bollywood and now dubs Baywatch [an American television series] into Hindi. And her daughter is a starlet in current super-slick Bollywood films. ■

Interview by

Ethirajan Anbarasan and Amy Otchet

Filmography

Nair's key productions:

My Own Country (1998): The story of an Ethiopian-born Indian doctor treating Aids and HIV patients in eastern Tennessee in the mid-1980s comes to realize that the epidemic is a spiritual as well as a medical emergency.

Kama Sutra: A Tale of Love (1997): A sumptuous exploration of the friendship and rivalry between a princess and her servant in a 16th-century Indian court. Both use the teachings of the Kama Sutra, an ancient treatise on love and sexuality, as weapons in their complex relations and the men in their lives.

The Perez Family (1995): Romantic tragi-comedy about the Mariel boat people who left Cuba for Miami, USA, in 1980.

The Day the Mercedes became a Hat (1993): Short video made in South Africa and inspired by the assassination of Chris Hani, leader of the South African Communist Party.

Mississippi Masala (1990): Story of an Indian family expelled from Uganda in 1972 under Idi Amin before managing a motel in small-town Mississippi, USA. Cultural worlds collide when the daughter falls in love with a black man.

Salaam Bombay! (1988): The director's first feature film is also her most famous. Detailing the lives of Bombay's street children, the film was shot on location with only a handful of professional actors. Most of the characters were portrayed by children living on the streets, including Chaipu who played the lead.

Documentaries include:

Children of a Desired Sex (1987): explores the conflicts facing pregnant women who decide to undergo abortions after learning that they bear female foetuses.

India Cabaret (1985): a portrayal of the lives of female strippers in a seedy Bombay nightclub.

So Far From India (1982): examines the separation between an Indian newspaper seller living in New York City and his wife and child who live in India.

Jama Masjid Street Journal (1979): Nair's first film was part of her student thesis project and draws on her personal experience of exploring life within a traditional Muslim community in Old Delhi from the perspective of a Western-educated Indian woman.

Good reading!

We place the *Courier* in our Library. It is one of the favourite publications of our library users. The new *Courier* has attracted many positive comments. We appreciate the new format and the broad coverage.

The Rector,
Saint Paul's University College
Awka, Nigeria

What about the heritage?

Personally I am very satisfied with the new *UNESCO Courier*. . . . However, I regret the disappearance of the feature on world heritage sites which appeared in the old format. It added a cultural tourism dimension and complemented the *World Heritage Review*, to which I am a subscriber.

Michel Escudier
Plouégat-Guerrand, France

Maori treasures

My mother, who is ninety-three years of age, has been subscribing to the *Courier* for decades. She passes copies of the magazine to me, and I have a shelf full of them. They are *taonga*, the Maori word for spiritual treasures. . . .

Examples of successful initiatives elsewhere on the planet are always inspirational. We need those to be covered by our media sources with an urgency never before seen in human history, and whatever the *Courier* can contribute to progress in that area is both very welcome and essential.

Jim Chapple
Aotearoa, New Zealand

No more change, please

The *Courier* has been a great help to me and my students . . . I suggest that the magazine should not change its present content and presentation, because it has a universal approach enabling it to handle topics in a wide range of fields in a clear and simple way, backed up by photos and facts and figures.

Bechane Manage
Harar, Ethiopia

From words to action

In my country it is not easy to get hold of the *UNESCO Courier*, and consequently I hand on my copies to my local library.

I would like to suggest that you launch a feature covering UNESCO's work and ways in which people can take part in it. . . . I think it is essential for young people to be involved in the Organization's work.

Mauricio Codina.

Cuba

What's in a name?

When I received the new *Courier* I didn't notice any radical change. The only thing that surprised me at first is that the order of words in the title has changed. Instead of *The UNESCO Courier* it seems to have become *UNESCO, the Courier*.

Kheïra Brahim
Oran, Algeria

Recycled paper

I like the new format of the *UNESCO Courier*. The magazine is very informative. Since UNESCO is focused on environmental issues, do you use recycled paper to produce the magazine?

Kim Burnham
ngwillia@ix.netcom.com

In spite of the high cost and inferior quality of printing on recycled paper, we hope to be using it as soon as possible.
Editor

CORRECTION

The author of the article "Kabul: women in the shadows", published on pages 3 to 8 of the October 1998 issue was Elizabeth Drévillon and not, as indicated in the table of contents on page 2, Dalila Taleb. Apologies all round for this error.

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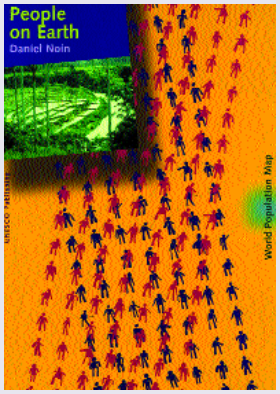

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